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# THOUGHTS ON PREACHING,

SPECIALLY

IN RELATION TO THE REQUIREMENTS  
OF THE AGE.

BY

✓  
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1861.



TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND

ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL,

LORD BISHOP OF LONDON,

DEAN OF THE CHAPEL ROYAL, ETC.,

*The Following Thoughts*

ON A

DEPARTMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY,

WHICH IT HAS BEEN

A LEADING OBJECT OF HIS EPISCOPATE TO EXTEND,

AND

THE TENDENCY OF HIS PERSONAL EXAMPLE TO ENCOURAGE,

ARE, WITH HIS LORDSHIP'S PERMISSION,

GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

“It was preaching that restored the splendour of the Church, when barbarism, and wars, and ignorance, either sate in or broke the doctor’s chair in pieces. . . . And by the same instrument God restored the beauty of the Church, when it was necessary she should be reformed; it was the assiduous and learned preaching of those whom God chose for his ministers in that work, that wrought the advantages, and persuaded those truths which are the *enamel* and beauty of our churches. And because by the same means all things are preserved, by which they are produced, it cannot but be certain that the present state of the Church requires a greater care and prudence in this ministry than ever.—JEREMY TAYLOR.—*Preface to Course of Sermons*, Part II.

“Nam quum per artem rhetoricam et vera suadeanter et falsa, quis audeat dicere, adversus mendacium in defensoribus suis inermem debere consistere veritatem, ut videlicet illi, qui res falsas persuadere conantur noverint auditorem vel benevolum, vel intentum, vel docilem præmio facere, isti autem non noverint? . . . . Illi fallacibus argumentis veritatem oppugnent, adserant falsitatem; isti nec vera defendere, nec falsa valeant refutare? Illi animos audientium in errorem moventes, impellentesque dicendo terreant, contristent, exhilarent, exhortentur ardentur; isti pro veritate lenti frigidique dormitent? Quis ita desipiat, ut hoc sapiat?”—AUG. DE DOCT. CHRIST. L. iv. c. 2.

## PREFACE.

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MANY and grievous have been the faults charged upon our modern preaching. On all sides is the complaint heard, of its want of adaptation to the conditions of an advanced and advancing age. Even by those who would gladly have thrown their shield over us, if they could,—who, as bearing rule among us, would be likely to look with tolerant and forbearing eye on the failures of those who serve,—charges of pulpit inefficiency have been put forth with the most undisguised and unsparing plainness.

These last, however, were but the faithful wounds of a friend, and we could have borne them. More painful to read, were the racy and caustic strictures on English preaching, put forth some time ago, by the most influential organ of public opinion, of which the age can boast; supported, as these have been, by similar statements in other departments of our periodical literature. The assumption seems to be made constantly, that the pulpit is losing its hold on the popular mind; that it has come down from its high vantage ground, as a first-rate power in

the state ; in fact, that, as an agency for influencing the will or guiding the thoughts of men, the day of preaching is gone by.<sup>1</sup>

By laymen, it is possible, these remarks have been made with too little consideration for the various and incessant demands which are made upon a clergyman's time ; as well as with too little sympathy towards those mental and physical conditions, which, as the author of the *Rambler* so feelingly tells us, must greatly affect the intellectual productions of any "writer, who condemns himself to compose on a stated day." Still this has not the less disposed the clergy to meet the charges of pulpit failure with unshrinking fairness ; or made them unwilling, whenever they have had opportunity of meeting together for mutual conference, to give to the consideration of the subject a distinguished prominence.

To the latter proof of a desire among them to entertain the question honestly, the present work owes its origin. On two occasions of large meetings of clergy, the author was applied to, by his brethren, to prepare a paper on "Preaching ;"—the *general* subject being given to him at one meeting, and that of "Preaching for the Age," at another. On each of these occasions, a further request was made to him for publication ; and

<sup>1</sup> The letters of "*Habitans in sicco*," in the *Times*, cannot fail to be remembered. Equivalent expressions to those here used will be found in the *North British Review*, Feb., 1856, the *Athenæum*, Nov., 1859, and other publications.



compliance with the wish was so far granted, as that portions of the matter contained in the following pages, were published in the *Christian Observer*, in the Spring of 1859. But, in the course of these successive efforts, more materials of thought had been gathered, than could be expected to find place in a monthly periodical; and therefore, encouraged by the kind suffrages of his brethren, the author has thought it might not be an unacceptable service, to present his views upon the subject of preaching, in an enlarged and more permanent form.

The writer refers to these circumstances, only that he may stand acquitted of presumption, in undertaking such a work. Many things, otherwise, he feels might have laid him open to this charge. For on such a subject, a man must speak with perfect freedom. Plain truths must be told. Prevailing faults must be pointed out. The responsibility of giving advice must be incurred; and an entire strain of thought and language adopted, which, no doubt, would come better from those in authority;—from those who bear rule in the Church, or from others who can speak from a professor's chair.

The Author was not deterred from his purpose by the great number of works which he could find already written upon the subject. On the contrary, in the way of set and formal dissertation on the principles and practice of preaching, the literature of our own age and

country seems to have produced comparatively little. The subject has been presented, in its more didactic aspects, by Claude and Vinet on the continent; valuable suggestions, for the Christian preacher, are contained in the *Ecclesiastes Anglicanus* of Mr. Gresley, and in the work on the Christian Ministry, by Mr. Bridges; whilst hints, from the layman's point of view, characterized by all that eloquence and power which distinguish our periodical literature, are supplied in the pages of the *Edinburgh* and other Reviews. And to each of these sources, it will be seen, the Author has not been sparing in his acknowledgements. But he has met with nothing so comprehensive and complete, upon the subject of preaching, as to make him think that further efforts in that direction were superfluous; or that, in suggesting means for increasing the efficiency of the modern pulpit, he should be found labouring in an exhausted field.

The adequate and full discussion of such a subject, it will be seen, is not a task to be undertaken by one of the working clergy. It requires an amount of varied reading and continuous thought, which only men of learned leisure can be expected to supply. Still, there are some practical aspects of the subject, which, after all, can be best dealt with by practical men. And it is as being himself of that number, chiefly, that the Author expects the following THOUGHTS to have any value. Among the mercantile and professional classes of the metropolis

it has been his privilege to exercise a ministry of twenty years. He has gone in and out among them,—tried to ascertain their opinions; generalized, as far as he could, on the law of their mental tastes and aptitudes; and, in relation to this subject of preaching, in particular, has laid himself out to discover wherein the educated and intelligent laity consider that their teachers are most at fault. From this last point of view, especially, the Author wishes the following pages to be read. If he seem to require from some of his brethren, more of diligent and thoughtful preparation for their sermons, than they have hitherto considered necessary, he wishes it to be remembered that he does not ask this in his own name merely. He is the organ of others, asking for what they demand, and nothing more;—

*“Tu quid ego, et populus mecum desideret, audi.”*

The book may possibly appear to want unity in one respect. The papers, on which it is founded, were written, originally, for men of his own age and standing. In the process of enlargement, and in the apparent paucity of works upon the subject of a practical kind, he saw reasons for incorporating into his remarks some suggestions, which, he feels, would be more suitable in a work specially intended for the younger clergy. The chapter on the “structure of a sermon,” as well as some portions of that on its “subject-matter,”

will perhaps be thought to require the shelter of some such explanation as this.

But, in the way of introductory remark, the writer will add no more. The anxieties attendant upon the publication of a work like this, are not a mere *author's* anxieties,—solicitudes as to how a book shall be received, or who will become its friends; who will be most tolerant towards its deficiencies, or who will be loudest to condemn. They are the anxieties of a public teacher of the Gospel;—awed by the responsibility of his self-chosen task, and fearing lest, in anything, he should not have spoken aright for Christ and for His Gospel. If satisfied on this point, he may wait all other issues calmly. If only, through grace and wisdom from above, he has been able to put the ordinance of preaching on its right foundation,—to define its place, to uphold its authority, to shew its mighty power for good, and to set forth when, and how, and by whom it may be so employed, as to be a greater blessing both to him that speaks and to them that hear, the writer will have had his reward. The rest he leaves to labourers in the same field hereafter;—content to have occupied the humblest post, in the advanced guard of religious progress, and, by his own too crude reflections to have stimulated the better thoughts of some better mind.

D. M.

*Camberwell, Jan. 1st, 1861.*

## CONTENTS.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### PREACHING, AS AN ORDINANCE OF GOD.

The alleged complaints against the modern Pulpit—Divine authority of preaching—Its history under the Old Testament—The prominence given to it in the New Testament—Its relation to the other rites of the Christian Church—Power of the Pulpit in marked periods of English history—The abuse of the power—The complaints of the writers of the “Tracts for the Times” on the prominence given to preaching—The recent impulse given to preaching—Adaptation to the popular mind the mainspring of Pulpit efficiency . . . . . PAGE 1

### CHAPTER II.

#### THE OFFICE OF PREACHING, AS DESIGNED FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF MANKIND IN RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

The common definitions of the object of Preaching—Definition of Bishop Wilkins—Precedence assigned to the Teaching office—This supported by Scripture—Two leading principles deducible

from this: I. That all Sermons should contain some positive instruction, and this in the most varied form. II. That all Sermons respect the claims of the reasoning faculty—Systematic Theology — The Philosophy of Christianity—Speaking with authority—The relative provinces of reason and faith . 17

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE INTELLECTUAL DEMANDS OF THE PRESENT AGE.

The general advancement of national intelligence—Literature of the poor—National schools—Popular lectures—Young Men's literary associations—Reading habits of the mercantile community—Sceptical and rationalizing tendencies of the age—How they are to be met—Objections against a higher intellectual standard of preaching—Objection I. Want of time—Relative importance of different ministerial duties—Objection II. Man's wisdom not necessary so only the Gospel be preached—Answer to this—Objection III. Want of natural ability—The practice of preaching the sermons of others—The limited and lawful use of borrowed materials . . . . . 37

### CHAPTER IV.

#### PERSUASION, AS THE FINAL OBJECT OF PREACHING.

Lawfulness of appeals to the passions—Our message to the whole man—Coarseness of a former age—The effect of regarding persuasion as the end of preaching—I. In causing a prominence to be given to the more encouraging aspects of the Gospel—Relative efficacy of appeals to hope and fear—II. In moderating the tone of our rebukes for sin—Use of irony—III. In inducing greater caution and charitableness on points of controversy—IV.



In the restraint imposed upon different forms of pulpit eccentricity—v. In the endeavour to give unction to our discourses, and generally to minister to a higher tone of personal devoutness . . . . . 66

## CHAPTER V.

### THE PARTS AND ARRANGEMENT OF A SERMON.

Definitions of a sermon—The different kinds—The text—I. Rules in relation to it—I. Should be chosen with a view to being used—II. Should be used in their own proper sense—III. Caution in the use of startling texts, and the limits of accommodation—II. The Exordium—Should be short—Calculated to awaken attention—Lead naturally to the subject to be discussed—III. General discussion of the subject—Necessity of unity—Arrangement of parts—Examples of modes of discussion—The question of announced divisions—How far essential—The necessity of a clearly indicated line of thought—IV. The peroration—The two opposite faults: 1. Of tediousness, 2. Of abruptness—Importance of appeals to the conscience in a conclusion . . . . . 92

## CHAPTER VI.

### ON STYLE, IN RELATION TO PREACHING.

Importance of style—Words not an accident of thoughts—Minds affected differently by different ways of saying the same thing—Style of Bishop Butler—I. The rule commonly given for preaching to be *plain*—How far this plainness is dependent on particular words—Preference for words of Saxon root—Whether plainness

excludes argument—Danger of familiarity—Condescending to the poor—II. The theory of simplicity as applied to style—I. In relation to diffuseness—2. In its compatibility with the ornate and the figurative—3. In regard to careful revision and study of the rules of art—Pains-taking indispensable to all good composition . . . . . 143

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF PREACHING.

Paramount authority of Scripture—We must preach THE WORD—  
I. In its *unity*—As one truth—One morality—Ethical element of Old Testament Scriptures—II. In its *integrity*—Partiality of preachers for particular departments of theological teaching—  
III. In the rightful order and precedence of its fundamental truths—The Atonement—The work of the Spirit—What is “preaching Christ?”—IV. In the impartial exhibition of its complementary and correlative doctrines—Predestination and Free Agency—Free Grace—Faith and Works—V. In its universal adaptations—Preaching on the events of the day—Evils of political preaching—Experimental preaching—The relation of Christianity to the affections—Concluding cautions . . . . . 175

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DELIVERY OF A SERMON.

Prejudice against elocution as an art—Opinion of Professor Blunt—The ordinance of preaching a testimony to the importance of good oral address—Effect of it on the Stage—Danger of mannerism—Cultivation of delivery among the ancients—Modern prac-

tice on the Continent and among Dissenters—The voice—Physical danger of overstraining it—The only qualification to speak audibly and pleasantly—Right pronunciation—Use of gesture—Practice of the ancients—Of Whitefield—Of Chalmers—Chief use of art to correct ungracefulness in action—Expression of the countenance—Necessity of earnestness—Baxter's lamentations—Trials of good men in relation to earnestness of delivery . . . . . 223

## CHAPTER IX.

### EXTEMPORE PREACHING, AND ITS EFFICACY AS COMPARED WITH THE WRITTEN SERMON.

The bearing of the foregoing chapters—Popular view of the relative advantages of the extemporaneous and the written styles—Primitive practice—Written style, when introduced—The practice of continental and other preachers—Arguments for the partial retention of the written style—Advantage to the same preacher of cultivating both styles—Different methods of extempore preaching—The memoriter method—The method from short notes—The self-reliant method—General qualifications necessary—Facile and correct expression—How to be acquired—Cultivation of the memory—Necessity of writing—Temptations of the extempore preacher . . . . . 260

## CHAPTER X.

### SUPPLEMENTAL TOPICS—CONCLUSION.

Expository preaching—Its relative advantages—Difficulties of the style—Courses of sermons—Usually attractive—Helpful to enlarged views of theology—Public catechizing—Ancient authority of—The benefits to the adult members of a congregation—Its

supposed difficulties—Sermons to children—The choice of subjects most suitable for—Illustration the great instrument for teaching the young—Necessity of preparation—Open-air preaching—The lawfulness of it—Supposed danger of bringing religion into ridicule—Liability to open challenges from the unbeliever—Needed cautions—Special services for the working classes—The Sunday evening services in cathedrals, &c.—Week-day services in parish churches—How to keep up the interest of special services—Conclusion . . . . . 303

## APPENDIX.

A—Complaints of the modern pulpit . . . . .	351
B—On some of the more dangerous phases of modern religious thought . . . . .	353
C—On mistakes in the selection of texts for sermons . . . . .	357
D—South on the sermons of the Puritans . . . . .	358
E—Use of words of Saxon Root . . . . .	359
F—Extemporaneous volubility . . . . .	361
G—Lord Brougham's letter to the father of Macaulay . . . . .	362
H—Mr. Pitt's mode of acquiring facility of expression . . . . .	365
I—Robert Hall's method of preparing his sermons . . . . .	366
K—Public catechizing in the Church . . . . .	367

# THOUGHTS ON PREACHING.

## CHAPTER I.

### PREACHING, AS AN ORDINANCE OF GOD.

The alleged complaints against the modern Pulpit—Divine authority of preaching—Its history under the Old Testament—The prominence given to it in the New Testament—Its relation to the other rites of the Christian Church—Power of the Pulpit in marked periods of English history—The abuse of the power—The complaints of the writers of the “Tracts for the Times” on the prominence given to preaching—The recent impulse given to preaching—Adaptation to the popular mind the mainspring of Pulpit efficiency.

ON reading the statements, which, according to our Preface, are constantly made, in reference to the present condition of the English Pulpit,—as declining in influence, and falling short of its ancient energy, and life, and power,—the first question which will occur to any candid mind, is, “Are these things so?” And, if they are, even though only in a limited degree, the further inquiry will follow, to what cause is

this lowered influence of a great agency to be ascribed? Is there anything in the authority upon which the institution rests? or in the other instrumentalities with which it has to compete? or in its own deficient adaptations to the wants and sympathies of mankind, which would account for the fact, that, while all the other beneficent influences which bear on the social and moral life of our country, are advancing, this mighty agency of Preaching is doing its work with feeble and slackened hand?

As some guide to us, in finding an answer to these questions, it may not be amiss to offer a few introductory remarks on PREACHING, AS AN ORDINANCE OF GOD; shewing the dignity and importance of the office, whether viewed in relation to other institutions of Divine appointment, or in its ascertained suitableness, as an agency to advance the happiness of mankind.

I. Now it is certain we should never have expected any failure of results from preaching, if we looked simply to its place and rank among Divine instrumentalities. It was among the first agencies, devised of God, for the instruction of the world. For, without claiming, under the economies antecedent to the Gospel, an office of men, precisely parallel to that of the Christian preacher, especially since the period of the Reformation, we have many intimations, that God often employed the hortatory and exegetical addresses



of wise and good men, with a view to the revelation and enforcement of His will, in patriarchal, Mosaic, and prophetic times. Thus Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of the coming of the Lord.<sup>1</sup> Noah, the eighth person, was a preacher of righteousness.<sup>2</sup> To Abraham was the covenant shewn, that he might be a witness for the truth of God in a dark world.<sup>3</sup> Whilst, not on Moses only, but on the seventy elders associated with him also, was the Spirit of God made to rest, both that they might bear, with their chief, the "secular burdens of the commonwealth, and also, might "prophecy," unto the people, the things which had been commanded them of God.<sup>4</sup> The duties of public teacher were continued afterwards by Joshua; and both of his preaching, and of that of his predecessor right noble are the specimens which have come down to us.<sup>5</sup> From the time of Samuel to the captivity, the work of public religious instruction seems to have been less systematically kept up. True, schools of the prophets were formally established,<sup>6</sup> and young men, called "sons of the prophets," were regularly trained up for the office of public instructors,<sup>7</sup> but "the word of the

<sup>1</sup> Jude v. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xviii. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Numb. xi. 24, 25.

<sup>5</sup> The Book of Deuteronomy passim, and Josh. xxii—xxiv.

<sup>6</sup> As at Naioth, and Bethel, and Jericho. See Bishop Patrick on 1 Sam. x. 5, 6.

<sup>7</sup> See 1 Kings xx. 35; 2 Kings ii. 5.

Lord was precious in those days. There was no open vision ;”<sup>8</sup> no one to whom the people could look for a stated course of public teaching ; insomuch, that the people were obliged either to resort to the prophets in private, or else to depend upon such itinerant preachers, as we find were sent out, under Jehoshaphat, to carry the book of the law through all the country, and to teach in the cities.<sup>9</sup> While the people were in Babylon, however, the power of preaching was revived. And, to the faithfulness and diligence of those who were put in trust with it, are we to attribute, not only the maintenance among the Jews of the true worship, but also the fostering of that deep-rooted hatred of idolatry, which, even in the lowest depths of their national degeneracy, never suffered them to bow the knee to false gods again.

But the time of the greatest revival of oral religious teaching, among the Jews, was after their return from the seventy years’ captivity. And the event was to the grateful people, as the clear shining of the sun after rain. The chief instrument in this national reform, as we know, was Ezra, a scribe of the law, who, after collecting and collating, as is supposed, the manuscripts of the sacred writings, and arranging them according to the order of our present canon, addressed himself to the establishment of that method of instruction, by means of paraphrase or comment upon the sacred word, which, with comparatively slight modifications, has con-

\* 1 Sam. iii. 2. See Patrick in loc.      ° 2 Chron. xvii. 8, 9.

tinued in the Church until this day. Leaving, to be still performed in the temple, the sacrifices and other forms of ceremonial worship, Ezra caused synagogues to be opened, for daily prayer, and for the reading and expounding of the law. For the effect produced on the people, by this more formal institution of a plan of public instruction, we have only to consult the touching narrative of Nehemiah. The scene was most heart-stirring. Neither Arnold in the market-place at Brescia, nor Latimer under the "shrouds" at Paul's Cross, nor Whitefield on Salisbury Plain, ever looked on such a sight, as that which Ezra commanded from his "raised pulpit," in the open street or square, that was "before the water-gate." From an early hour on the Sabbath morn had the assembled thousands been engaged in the service,—in prayer, and responses, and hearing of the law. But, as Ezra and his associates, after "reading the law of God distinctly," proceeded "to give the sense, and to cause them to understand the reading," such a panic of godly sorrow seemed to have come over the minds of the assembly, accompanied, as it was, by the most passionate outbursts of strong emotion, that it was deemed expedient by the masters of the assembly to bring the service to a close. "So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be grieved."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Nehem. viii. 11.

Of the important place assigned to Preaching under the Gospel, it seems superfluous to speak. Christianity owes everything to preaching. Its fore-runner was a preacher. Its Great Author was a Preacher. Its first ministers were preachers; and, by the agency of preaching, did it make its progress in the world. Disciples knew they could not overrate the importance of this ordinance in their Divine Lord's estimation. It was the subject of His first injunction to them, even as it entered into His last. Does a wavering follower interpose the urgency of domestic claims in the way of his serving Christ? He is told that there are far higher claims demanding his attention; "Go thou and PREACH the kingdom of God."<sup>11</sup> Would the gathered group at Mount Olivet know what part of their work lay nearest to the Master's heart, as He was going away? They hear His parting command, "Go ye into all the world and PREACH the Gospel to every creature."<sup>12</sup>

Before adverting, however, to the various testimonies to the importance of preaching, found in other parts of the New Testament,—testimonies direct, clear, and "in number numberless,"—it may be well to view the ordinance, in relation to those other institutions and rites of Christianity with which it has to co-operate, and which it would be to our souls' hurt to disparage. It has ever been an artifice of the great enemy to turn the Church of

<sup>11</sup> Luke ix. 60.

<sup>12</sup> Matt. xvi. 15.

Christ into a house divided against itself; to destroy the fair symmetry of her proportions,—either by setting one agency against another, or else by exalting one part of her work, only to throw greater slight upon the rest. In the times of the Puritans, Hooker tells us, the rivalry set up was between “preaching” and “reading;” and, by some, man’s word was invested with a power above that of the word of God.<sup>13</sup> In later times, the opposition is made to be between the relative importance of preaching and the prayers; and we have a chaplain of Charles II. telling us, “One pretends to magnifie the public prayers, but vilifie preaching; with another preaching and hearing are all the religion;”<sup>14</sup> the worthy chaplain following up his observations with a remark, which, perhaps, would apply with equal propriety to those, who are prone to make like invidious contrasts in our own day; namely, that the people, who are given to set prayers and preaching against each other, are usually those who do not care much about either.

With the form which this controversy has assumed, in modern times, we are all familiar. Preaching has had to stand on the defensive against the charge of an usurped pre-eminence, which, it is alleged, has cast all the other

<sup>13</sup> Ecc. pol. V., cxxii. 11—14.

<sup>14</sup> Glanvil’s Essay concerning preaching, p. 14, ed. 1703. See also Bishop Burnet’s Pastoral Care, c. ix., commencement.

agencies of the Church into the shade. We speak not of allegations, made in relation to the recent movements for "Special Services." More than fifteen years ago,—long before the huge concert-hall had resounded with the responses of our solemn litany, or the dome and nave of our metropolitan cathedrals had sparkled with their circling or foliated jets of gas,—the authors of the "Tracts for the Times" had begun to decry, in no measured terms, the modern rage for preaching. They described this growing tendency of the age, as based upon a "worldly system;" as not conducing to "a healthful and reverential tone of feeling in respect to the blessed sacraments;" and as "the undue exaltation of an instrument, which Scripture, to say the least, has never much recommended."<sup>15</sup>

These statements could not fail to excite surprise, if it were only for their boldness. The inferior place assigned to preaching, in relation to *sacraments*, seemed to be little in harmony with that language of the Apostle, "For Christ sent us not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel."<sup>16</sup> Whilst it seemed a yet more strange thing to speak of an ordinance, as "not much recommended in Scripture," which, to say nothing of other testimonies, filling up whole columns of a concordance, is enjoined upon Timothy, by one of the most solemn adjurations in the whole word of God. "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who

<sup>15</sup> Tracts for the Times, No 87, p. 75.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Cor. i. 17.



shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom, **PREACH THE WORD.**"<sup>17</sup>

It would be easy to contrast, with these modern notions, the views of the early Fathers upon the subject of preaching;<sup>18</sup> or those put forth by men of a former age, in our own country,—by Grindal, and Cranmer, and Jewel, and Thorndike, or even by the great Hooker himself. The last mentioned writer, at all events, will not be regarded by any, as one likely to favour the undervaluing of sacraments. And yet he would have us esteem preaching as "the blessed ordinance of God, sermons as keys to the kingdom of heaven, as wings to the soul, as spurs to the good affections of man, unto the sound and healthy as food, as physic unto diseased minds."<sup>19</sup>

But in determining the precedence to be given to this or that ordinance of the Church, the appeal, after Scripture, must be to the observed facts of history. And then, we should ask fearlessly, whether the worst *preaching* times have not always been the worst *praying* times;<sup>20</sup> and whether the revived power of the Pulpit

<sup>17</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Thus Gregory Nazianzen says, "Preaching is the principal thing that belongs to us ministers," Orat. i. See also extract from Augustine and Chrysostom, in the introductory chapter of Moule's Christian Oratory of the First Five Centuries.

<sup>19</sup> Eccl. Pol. v. c. 22.

<sup>20</sup> See Bridge's Christian Ministry, Part IV., c. i., 4, éd. 1835.

has not usually been accompanied with increased reverence for God's holy word and sacraments? Never, surely, was preaching at a lower ebb, than in the time immediately preceding the Reformation, in the days of "unpreaching prelates," when the pulpits of the land were described by Latimer as "bells without clappers."<sup>21</sup> Will any tell us that, in lieu of sermons, at that time, there was more of reverence among the people for the higher rites of the Church? Again, the "golden age" of preaching we should probably refer to the revival of the fourth century, when East and West were alike sending forth their masters of mighty oratory, and Chrysostom and Augustine arose to change the face of Christianity and to shake the world. Will any charge it, as a consequence of this resuscitated Pulpit power, that "the other ministrations of the Church were neglected," and a general "superficiality" induced "in the pursuit of holiness?"

We conclude, therefore, that these competitions, between one Scriptural ordinance and another, are both uncalled for and unwise. Let each have its own. Neither can do the work of the other. If people are asleep, it is not by frequent sacraments alone, that we can hope to rouse them; and if they are sunk deep in vice and ruin, a more stimulating appeal must be made

<sup>21</sup> He says, "A priest might have left off a sermon twenty Sundays, and never have been blamed." Latimer's Sermons, vol. i., p. 182.

to their consciences than the call to daily prayer. Thus preaching, though not a substitute for any rite of Christianity, is both auxiliary to all, and indispensable to all. Other ordinances may be the channels of grace and life, but, without preaching, people would not see their need of grace and life: and “the golden pipes” of the sanctuary would become closed up, from an unappreciating sense of the blessings they were designed to convey.

But perhaps the most conclusive argument, in favour of the importance of preaching is that supplied by the history of our own country, in the power which, whether for good or for evil, the pulpit has ever exercised over the national mind. Professor Blunt has cited some examples, and his list might easily have been extended.<sup>22</sup> The pulpit, more than any other means, stirred up the people to cast off the fetters of the Papacy, in favour of the Reformation. The pulpit was the great instrument for keeping up to their pitch of fierce and misguided zeal the abettors of the Commonwealth. In the last days of the Stuarts, its aid was called in to uphold the ark of our endangered Protestantism, whilst every great revival of religion our country has witnessed since—by Owen and Howe, by Whitefield and Wesley, by Romaine and Newton, by Scott and Simeon,—has been a fresh testimony to the truth of that word, “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Duties of a Parish Priest, Lect v. p. 142.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Cor. i. 21.

Other countries of Christendon and other churches would supply like testimonies.<sup>24</sup> Of course it has to be conceded, in relation to these instances of the power of the pulpit, which are taken from the more troubled times of our nation's history, that means were had recourse to which we should not think of employing now, and which, we trust, may never be employed again. Never did this power make itself so much felt, as in the times of the civil wars, but it was too often the power of an abused trust, of a desecrated ordinance, of a weapon of spiritual warfare, turned against the precepts of Him, in whose Name it professed to be employed. Preachers, on both sides,<sup>25</sup> addressed themselves indiscriminately to the worst passions of our nature; degraded their office into an apostleship of discontent and faction; often making use of holy words and topics, as a mere vehicle for party, or, perhaps, personal invective; and, to the purposes of "hatred, malice, and all uncharitable-

<sup>24</sup> See in almost any Biographical Dictionary or Encyclopædia, under the names of Arnold of Brescia, Savonarola, Capestran, &c. See also the remarks of Southey on the Portuguese and some Spanish preachers, in his *Book of the Church*.

<sup>25</sup> In no preacher did the fault show itself more than in South. With him Milton is the "blind adder who spit venom on the King's person;" Cromwell is "Baal, a bankrupt, beggary fellow who entered the Parliament House, with a threadbare torn cloak and greasy hat, and, perhaps, neither of them paid for," and Sir Henry Vane, "that worthy Knight who was executed on Tower Hill." See *Preface to Sermons*, vol. i. p. 19.

ness," perverting the sweet ministries of the gospel of peace.

But, all this allowed for, we have proof enough left, that, as an agency for influencing the social and moral life of our country, the Pulpit is entitled to a foremost place. Our own times supply evidence of this, in a remarkable degree. We have not been backward in the application of other instrumentalities—cheap education, striking tracts, increasing intercourse with the clergy by pastoral visitation, and "the Book and its Mission," finding its way from house to house. And yet we have had men drawn to our "sermons for the working classes," who, in regard of means for bringing them under the power of the Gospel, could be attracted by nothing else. They find, in preaching, something that responds to a felt void, and an instinctive need. Instruction, by means of books, supposes knowledge, cultivation, a previously awakened interest and taste. As a pre-requisite to success, the preacher can dispense with these. His hopes of a gained attention, on the part even of the poorest of his flock, rest on the sympathies to be awakened by the living voice; on his being able to throw himself into the same grooves of thinking and feeling with his hearers; seeing eye to eye with them, and feeling heart to heart with them, on all the interesting topics of human thought. The preached Gospel goes down to the lowest depths of their moral being, and conviction can be withheld no longer.

“Come see a man which told me all things that ever I did ; is not this the Christ ?”<sup>26</sup>

And it is on this power of adaptation to the different phenomena of social life—an adaptation, embracing in its range, all orders of mind, all varieties of character, all class-sympathies, and all diversities of external lot—that, for any effective hold on the spirits of men, the Pulpit must ever take its stand. The preacher has resources at his command, both Divine and human, which, in the case of any grievous inefficiency or failure, must leave him without excuse. To stand up, as he is privileged to do, as in Christ’s stead ; to see an assembly of persons gathered around him, in many of whom the “preparations of the heart from the Lord,” may, at that moment, be going on ; to have the choice before him, of all-elevating and inspiring themes—the promises of the Gospel, the aids of the Spirit, the ministry of angels, whatever could tend to lift the mind above the sordidness of this poor life, and give it nearer fellowship with the powers of eternity ; and withal to feel that he is not forbidden to mingle with these loftier topics, the subjects which lie nearest to men’s hearts,—their home duties, their fire-side anxieties, the difficulties and trials which meet them in their daily work—all this should make the Gospel preacher feel that he is in possession of a weapon, “mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds,” and fitted, by its varied appliances, to convert and save the world.

<sup>26</sup> John iv. 29.

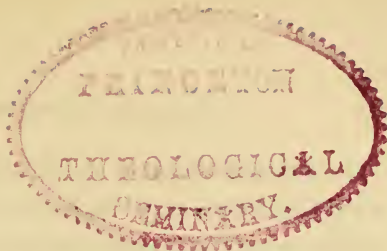


And, therefore, especially, if we may so adopt an inspired form of phrase, we would have the preacher always remember, that the Gospel was "made for man," and not man for the Gospel. He must not restrict to a few, a boon which God intended for mankind. It is not enough that we speak comfortably to penitents, and devoutly to sinners, and experimentally to the advanced and ripened saint. We must strike further out. We must aim to reach the hearts, and intellects, and consciences of those who lie beyond this eclectic circle. No greater mischief, we conceive, can be done to the Gospel than to exhibit it as a narrow and exclusive system; as something sealed or shut up to all who have not part in certain limited and conventional sympathies; making Christianity to be a thing which requires its followers to live in a world of their own, and implying, that to take up the cross the Christian is to lay down all that is distinctive in the man. So far otherwise,<sup>27</sup> it should be our aim to vindicate the essential *humanness* of the Gospel,—its suitability to man as we find him now; as a system, which will furnish room for all his faculties, scope for all his gifts, objects for all his desires, strength for his every duty, and a reason for his every hope. In a word, it should be the preacher's constant study to make manifest, that the religion of Jesus Christ, while it quickens

<sup>27</sup> See some remarks on this subject in Prof. Vinet's Installation Lecture, in "Homiletics," p. 467.

to a new and higher life all the emotions of our spiritual nature, is yet the only religion which meets a busy world on its own terms ; shedding its sanctities over the common task, and sympathising with the toiling family of man.





## CHAPTER II.

### THE OFFICE OF PREACHING, AS DESIGNED FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF MANKIND IN RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

The common definitions of the object of Preaching—Definition of Bishop Wilkins—Precedence assigned to the Teaching office—This supported by Scripture—Two leading principles deducible from this : I. That all Sermons should contain some positive instruction, and this in the most varied form. II. That all Sermons respect the claims of the reasoning faculty—Systematic Theology—The Philosophy of Christianity—Speaking with authority—The relative provinces of reason and faith.

HAVING endeavoured to vindicate the high authority of preaching, as an agency, ordained of God, adapted to human circumstances, and, whether for good or for evil, found to be among the primary forces which act upon our social and moral life, we must, in order to see how such an instrumentality may be best employed, go back to the consideration of its original design,—in other words, must try to arrive at some definite understanding upon the question—What is the proper OFFICE OF PREACHING ? What was it instituted and ordained to do ?

And the answer to this inquiry, by one authority, is,

“the sum and substance of preaching is to bring men to repentance, and to a firm belief in the Gospel.”<sup>1</sup> By another we are told, that “the end of all preaching is to make men good;”<sup>2</sup> whilst, from a third, we have a yet more vague answer to our question, that “the primary intention of preaching is the reformation of mankind.”<sup>3</sup> It seems obvious to remark that all these definitions are very inadequate; and present but a very limited and imperfect view either of what preaching aims at, or what preaching does. We should rather say that the ends we propose to ourselves, by this service, are to inform ignorance, to alarm carelessness, to arouse indifference, to excite to holiness, to build up believers on their most holy faith,—in a word, to magnify the grace of the Gospel, by bringing the power of a living Christianity close home,—to the heart, to the conscience, to the life. We believe preaching to be the channel by which God comes to the soul of man, for every gracious purpose, whether of conviction, or conversion, or establishment, or instruction in righteousness. The message of God to the human spirit is by “the still small voice.”

Such, we say, are among the ends of preaching. But in order to these ends being accomplished, the means

<sup>1</sup> Archb. Tillotson. See Gresley's *Ecclesiastes Anglicanus*, 2nd ed. p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Blair's *Lectures*, vol. 2, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Campbell's *Philos. of Rhetoric*, book i. c. x. § 5.

to be employed must be such as are adapted to man's moral and intellectual nature. By this rule God deals with us Himself. A tacit reference to it pervades all the exhortations and requirements of the Bible. We live under an economy of mutually dependent agencies. The Gospel, we know, is "the power of God unto salvation unto them that believe." But to help them to believe, to teach them to believe, to furnish them with the evidence on which they are expected to believe, and, against all the opposition and enmity of the carnal mind, to *prevail* with them to believe,—this is the preacher's work ; and if he is to succeed in it, and if he is to be blessed in it, he must proceed by rule,—working in harmony with the laws of nature and of God.

Hence, we think, a better line of thought will be marked out for the further prosecution of our subject, if we proceed upon a view of the design of preaching, suggested by Bishop Wilkins—"The great end of preaching," he says, "being either to inform or persuade, this may be most effectually done by such rational ways of explanation and confirmation as are most fit and proper to satisfy men's judgments and consciences ;"<sup>4</sup> and, again, a few pages afterwards he tells us, "The principal scope of a Divine orator should be to teach clearly, convince strongly, and persuade powerfully."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Preface to his Discourse on the Gift of Preaching.

<sup>5</sup> Gift of Preaching, § 5.

In the principles here laid down, it will be seen that a special prominence is given to the TEACHING part of the preacher's office ; that an act of homage is paid to the *intellectual* endowments of humanity ; as if all our work would be very inefficiently done, and, in all probability, would very soon be *undone*, if, while prevailing with men to embrace the faith of the Gospel, we had not first won for it the consent of an intelligent conviction, and persuaded them that it was a reasonable service.

Does Holy Scripture bear out this view ? Does it afford any sanction for saying to a preacher, as this counsel, in effect, says, 'Alarm the conscience if you can, move to emotion if you can, persuade the will if you can, but whatever you do, you must TEACH ; must remember you are dealing with beings endued with the powers of reflection and thought ; must honour, even as God Himself honours, the first demands of a rational nature.'

We think Scripture does endorse this counsel. Thus, do we inquire who were they, under the Old Testament, who came nearest to the Divine standard of ministerial perfectness ? the answer is, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."<sup>6</sup> Or would we know what was the custom of him who was emphatically THE "preacher," to them of old time, we are reminded "because the preacher was wise, he still

<sup>6</sup> Jer iii. 15.

taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words.”<sup>7</sup> Still more should we be inclined to draw such a conclusion from notices found in the New Testament. Nicodemus felt he could pay no higher act of homage to the prophet of Nazareth, than to speak of Him “as a TEACHER come from God.”<sup>8</sup> The last command given by the ascending Saviour to His disciples was, “Go ye and TEACH all nations.”<sup>9</sup> Twice do we find the apostle glorying in his designation as an ordained “TEACHER of the Gentiles;”<sup>10</sup> and, as often, do we find him admonishing the youthful bishop of the church of Ephesus, that, in choosing fit men to serve in the sacred ministry of Christ’s church, he be careful to select those who are “apt to TEACH.”<sup>11</sup>

Neither does this deference of Scripture to the human intelligence, proceed upon the supposition that our powers of reflection and thought act mechanically; that the mind of man is a mere passive recipient, obliged to accept what is put before it without inquiry, and without choice. On the contrary, the assumption is made constantly, that the understanding in man is both active and free,—that, within certain limits, and on its own proper subjects, it both *can* reason and ought to reason

<sup>7</sup> Eccl. xii. 8, 9.<sup>8</sup> John iii. 2.<sup>9</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19.<sup>10</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 7; 2 Tim. i. 11.<sup>11</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 2; 2 Tim. ii. 24.

on whatever propositions are offered for its acceptance. Thus, of Paul we are told, that “as his manner was, he went in unto them, and three Sabbath days *reasoned* with them out of the Scripture.”<sup>12</sup> Of the Bereans it is testified that they were “more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.”<sup>13</sup> To the strangers scattered abroad, Peter gives the counsel, “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a *reason of the hope* that is in you;”<sup>14</sup> and Paul lays it as a solemn charge upon his Thessalonian converts, “*Prove* all things; hold fast that which is good.”<sup>15</sup> Indeed, on this point, we have what seems to be a yet higher warrant. For, as if afraid to *force* the mind of man to believe even His own words, we have the Almighty saying by His prophet, “Come now and let us *reason* together, saith the Lord.” Whilst the first and fundamental work of the Spirit in the human soul is an awakened rational consent to the justice of the Divine reproof: “And when He is come He will *convince* the world of sin.”<sup>16</sup>

Two important principles, in relation to the office of preaching, seem to arise out of this view.

<sup>12</sup> Acts xvii. 2; reasoned “dialectically” as South notes, from *διελέγετο*.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. ver. 11.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 15.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Thess. v. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Marginal reading of John xvi. 8. Certis et indubitatis argumentis alicui aliquid persuadeo, et demonstro ac dissentientes refuto. Schleusner on verb *ἐλεγχω*.



I. The first is, that we must lay ourselves out *to give instruction in our sermons*; that we are bound to supply those who come to us with matter for profitable and improving thought; that we are not to be for ever “dropping buckets into empty wells;” and, at the end of a weary hour, leave our people to find that we “have brought nothing up.” We should remember that, for so much of the time as follows upon the devotional part of the service, we have the congregation at our mercy. They cannot well leave us if they would; and, therefore, if we expect them to give us their thoughtful attention, the least we are bound to do is to give them something to think about. They are assembled before us, as Cornelius and his kinsmen were assembled, to have explained to them the everlasting principles of truth and duty; to hear something of their condition and responsibilities as moral agents; to learn more of their relation to God and to Christ, and to an eternal world; in a word, to be taught both how to live, and how to die. “Now, therefore, we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.”<sup>17</sup>

Let us never forget, then, that our one great work is to INSTRUCT. The foundation of our authority is a book, a document, something which is to be taught. “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were

<sup>17</sup> Acts xi. 33.

written for our learning;”<sup>18</sup> and if “all Scripture be given by inspiration of God,” it is that it may be “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” We make not our true use of this book, unless, as preachers, we are diligent to open its meaning, to confirm its facts, to apply its principles, to deduce its lessons, to illustrate its harmony with other parts of our revealed system, and, generally, to exhibit it in its entire adaptation to the moral and intellectual nature of man. Every discourse is imperfect, which has not its pervading or underlying element of *direct teaching*; whether in the way of doctrine distinctly stated, or inference logically argued, or evidence strikingly corroborated,—of precepts, which are had in reverence of all men, shewn to have a reach of jurisdiction which had not been perceived before, or of truths, known and believed of all men, made to arrest attention, because presented in some new and striking light.

Especially, would we lay stress upon this last point, the need of a perpetual variety and freshness in our

<sup>18</sup> In the version immediately preceding our authorised translation (1582), the passage runs, “is profitable to teach, to argue, to correct, to instruct in justice.” The point, however, will not escape observation, that of *four* avowed ends for which Scripture is here said to be profitable, *three* have an immediate relation to the intellectual faculties. See Schleusner and others on διδασκαλία, ἐλεγχος, παιδεία.



sermons. The complaint, among hearers, is far from an uncommon one, with regard to their teacher, that he is always preaching the same sermon. After listening to him for a few months, they are able to take the most accurate gauge of his intellectual dimensions—how far he will branch out, how deep he will fathom, how high he will soar. They have accompanied him in his mental processes again and again; have traced his principle and practice,—his illustration and confirmation,—his consolations to the godly, and his warnings to the sinner,—through all their monotonous combinations. Everything is done by line and square. They know exactly when the same illustration will recur; how the old practical caution will come in; can see when his mind is coming back to a certain well-known point in its orbit, and the coming peroration is casting its welcome shadow before.

Now it is certain we cannot afford to dispense with an agent so powerfully operative, both in kindling and keeping alive attention, as is this of novelty. Our felt difficulty, as preachers, is, that we have to gain a vital entrance for accepted truth; to interest people, week after week, in statements, with a theoretical knowledge of which they have been familiar from childhood. And, inasmuch as we cannot preach to them “another gospel,” our only option is to preach a gospel which, though “not another,” shall minister to our nature’s love of “some new thing,” by being presented under

new combinations—preaching always the same doctrine, but not always in the same way.<sup>19</sup>

And we can plead the highest authority for this mode of preaching. The royal preacher, who had only one truth to declare, was not satisfied without “setting in order many proverbs;”<sup>20</sup> whilst, of a well-furnished teacher under the Gospel, the description given is, “Therefore every scribe, which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.”<sup>21</sup> Yet more is a sanction given to diversified forms of teaching, by the varied style and structure of the sacred volume itself. Why, if all minds were alike, or if the same minds were alike in all states, should we have the one, unchanging, everlasting truth of God revealed to us in such broken and multiform shapes? Why must we be taught, now by the calm dignity of history, now by the rapt strains of prophecy, now by the sweet melody and flow of song? Why has such a variety for our intellectual taste been provided, in the march of the stately argument, in the eloquent and sublime discourse, in the easy and unaffected narrative, in the sparkling glitter and word-painting of the parable, and in the letters of loving confidence, as they passed from friend to friend? Surely, in all this, we see a beneficent provision that

<sup>19</sup> Non nova, sed novè, Vincent of Lorins.

<sup>20</sup> Eccles. xii. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Matt. xiii. 52.

none may escape ; a designed adaptation to the complicated structure of the human spirit ; a purpose that, as the mirror of Divine requirement was held up, in this way or that, each man should behold "his natural face in a glass," and, in the application of the word to his existing state and character, find that old things have become new. In this, as in all things, Scripture deals with man as it finds him. Satiety with that which is good is an infirmity of our organization, an accident of our lapsed humanity.<sup>22</sup> Good spirits never tire of goodness. But, in the strict sense, men are *not* good ; and until they are, we must, in dealing with the slow and sluggish minds of our race, have recourse to every form of rational appeal we can think of. We must "be made all things to all men," that we may "by all means save some."<sup>23</sup>

II. But the passages we have cited from Scripture, as seeming to require from a preacher, that he respect the claims of the rational intelligence, suppose him to be something more than a mere purveyor of food to the mental appetite, however skilled he may be in adapt-

<sup>22</sup> See Dr. Kidd's Introductory Lecture to his Course of Comparative Anatomy at Oxford 1824, p. 55, where it is argued that the decay of pleasing impressions once experienced, and the consequent desire of novelty, are referable to unavoidable physical causes.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 22.

ing that food to the often cloyed and capricious palate. He is to be a "*reasoner*" as well as a "teacher;" a "disputer" as well as a "scribe;" challenging, for all he advances, the assent of an enlightened judgment, and "able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers."<sup>24</sup>

We deem this an important aspect of the teacher's office. We know there are people who make a positive merit of abjuring argument, of abnegating, more or less, the province of the intellect in matters of religion,—almost making it to appear that faith and reason are two antagonist forces, and that the ascendancy of the one involves the inevitable, if not the designed, subjection of the other. And infidel writers, as might be expected, have always been but too ready to take hold of such admissions. Hume, in particular, constantly speaks as though there were no medium between rejecting Christianity, and abandoning the claims of human reason. Whilst Tindal tells us that "Revelation requires the taking of all things upon trust, and that if men are governed by revelation, they must take the words in the literal, plain, and obvious meaning, how absurd soever it appears to their carnal reason."<sup>25</sup>

But no wise preacher of the Gospel will allow

<sup>24</sup> Titus i. 9.

<sup>25</sup> See for this and similar references, the Author's Hulsean prize essay, *The Christian System Vindicated*, 2nd Edit., § vi., p. 140.

this, nor any view, in fact, by which reason becomes deposed from its just supremacy in the mind of man.<sup>26</sup> Of course we shall never forget that there are revealed facts, which, from their own nature, must be beyond the reach of the human faculties; that there is a shrine of inmost truth, which seems to be fenced off from the intended range of man's thought, and which he cannot even attempt to look into, without the effort recoiling hurtfully upon himself. But where reason *can* judge it *should* judge. It is as much a gift of God, as revelation is; and, between the clearly expressed decisions of both there can be no conflict and no jar. "Whatever principles," says Melancthon, "have been transcribed from the common reason and feelings of human nature, are to be accounted not less Divine than those contained in the tables given to Moses. And it could not have been the intention of our Maker to supersede by a law graven on stone that which was written by His own finger on the fleshly tables of the heart." One of our

<sup>26</sup> "Powerful reasoning," says Saurin, "should be the soul of all our sermons. You may speak with authority, open all the treasures of erudition, give full scope to a lively and sublime imagination and harmony of your periods, yet what will all your discourses without *reason* be? a noise, a sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal. You may confound, but you cannot convince. You may dazzle, but you cannot instruct. You may delight, but cannot hope to change, to sanctify, and to transform your hearers." See Claude on Composition of a Sermon, note on § 8.

Christian poets has well shewn us how we may do all honour to faith, while still according its high prerogative to reason, as God's noblest gift to man:—

“Fond as we are, and justly fond of faith,  
Reason, we grant, demands our first regard;  
The mother honour'd as the daughter dear.  
Reason the root; fair faith is but the flower:  
The fading flower shall die; but reason lives  
Immortal as her Father in the skies.  
When faith is virtue, reason makes it so.  
Wrong not the Christian; think not reason yours:  
'Tis reason our Great Master holds so dear;  
'Tis reason's injured rights His wrath resents;  
'Tis reason's voice obeyed His glories crown;  
To give lost reason life He pour'd His own.”<sup>27</sup>

Several good effects, we think, will follow on the view here put forth.

Thus it will suggest to us the expediency of ordering our public teaching on some *orderly*, and *connected*, and *scientific* plan. We shall aim, as occasion serves, to bring out the entire scheme of the Gospel with more of breadth, and symmetry, and comprehensiveness, shewing the coherence and mutual dependence of its parts,—the relation of that which is outward and economic, in a revealed system, to that which is spiritual and unchanging—and the gradual development, by means of successive dispensations, of the one truth, the one faith,

<sup>27</sup> Young's Night Thoughts, Night IV.



the one hope, the one immortality. Our aim, in these more didactic aspects of revealed truth is, not to submit the Christian dogma to the arbitration of any human philosophy, but to shew that Christianity has a philosophy of its own,—in other words, that it teaches nothing but what is accordant with itself, accordant with the Divine nature, accordant with the intellectual and moral powers of man.<sup>28</sup>

And hence, a further effect of the view here taken, will be to make us very careful in our exposition of the relation in which *Gospel truth stands to all other truth*. We shall be studious to shew that Christianity is the friend of all that is liberal and large in human thought; that it does not require us to abnegate any truth of which we have certain knowledge; that it does not war either with the discoveries of science, or the facts of history, or the first principles of morals. On the contrary, we shall be glad to make it appear, that there is a progress in theology, as well as in other sciences; a progress, that is, not in the sense of any new truth to be discovered, but in the sense of a fuller and more perfect understanding of the truth which we already have. The revelation which is complete, as it comes from God, may be progressive, as it is apprehended by *us*. Who will say there has been no advance in the principles of sacred hermeneutics, since the times of the Greek and

<sup>28</sup> See, on this subject, Professor Vinet's Installation Address at Lausanne, p. 464 of Homiletics.

Latin Fathers ? or that, with all the light which modern travellers have thrown upon the topography and natural history of the East, the language of the Bible is no better understood now, than it was three centuries ago ? Has no gain, in consistency and clearness, accrued to our religious philosophy from a more assiduous cultivation, in our day, of mental and moral science ? and are there not many forms of difficulty and cavil, in relation to Christianity, which, though occasioning much perplexity to the thoughtful mind in past ages, have been so cleared up by our more ripened criticism and scholarship, that the boldest adversary of the faith would not dare to urge them now.<sup>30</sup> Willingly, therefore, and with strong confidence let the religious teacher go hand in hand with all literary and scientific progress. Let him not fear to mould his theological teaching upon the advanced knowledge of the times, and in harmony with it. It was well observed, in rela-

<sup>30</sup> Take, as a single example, the apparent discrepancy between Matt. xxvii. 44 and Luke xxiii. 39, the former making it appear that both the thieves railed at the Saviour, the latter that the railing was confined to one. There is nothing impossible, in some ancient modes of explaining this, that *both* the thieves did rail at first, and that the heart of *one* of them was suddenly changed (see Hammond, Annot. in loc.), but remembering the Hebrew Greek in which Matthew wrote, there is surely something more satisfactory in the explanation of Bythner, that when it is not intended to express the individual distinctly, the *plural* is used for the singular in the He-



tion to a late champion of infidelity, Holyoake, that most of his objections were referable to bad statements, by evangelical teachers, of evangelical doctrine. The remark may, at all events, suggest caution. There is an uncareful way of quoting the authority of Scripture, in relation to subjects, on which it does not profess to instruct us, and in support of facts which it was never intended to prove. And thereupon issue is joined, in relation to some well-attested conclusion of human science. conflict is as unseemly, as it is false. In the apprehension of the teacher only, can it have any existence. "To suppose the possibility of two opposite truths," Locke tells us, "is to overturn the foundation of human certainty and to render all our faculties useless."<sup>31</sup>

Lastly, it is only when we have ceded to the claims of the rational intelligence all that can properly be demanded for it, that we *can speak with authority*.

There is no virtue in addressing our congregations in the bondsman's key of "bated breath and whispering humbleness." The Scribes of our Lord's time spoke in this tone;—could speak in no other, as knowing that they were "teaching for doctrines, what were but the commandments of men." Still the natural consequence followed, that they lost their influence. Hence the brew. Bythner's Heb. Gram., p. 7. Blunt's Parish Priest, p. 43, where some other instances are given.

<sup>31</sup> Essay on Human Understanding, Book iv., c. 18.

surprise of the multitude at the fearless and undoubting confidence with which the Saviour spoke. There was a decision in His manner, which made the truth appear truth. "And they were astonished at His doctrine : for He taught them as one having authority and not as the Scribes."<sup>32</sup>

In degree, this unshrinking and authoritative tone is required of those, who are put in trust with the Gospel in our own day. They are to use it wisely, no doubt ; and care must be taken to shew that such a tone is adopted, not for themselves as teachers, but for the message which they are commissioned to unfold. This done, however, and the persuasion in our own minds clear, that the words we are uttering are "the true sayings of God," it is required, even of the feeblest among us, that we be "valiant for the truth."<sup>33</sup> "And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."<sup>34</sup> "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority."<sup>35</sup> "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."<sup>36</sup> The distinction which it seems necessary to have before us, in our preaching, is that we are not so much apostles for a system, as ambassadors for a Sovereign.<sup>37</sup> For the message, therefore, so far as we have mastered it,—so far as we can shew a Divine warrant for what we ad-

<sup>32</sup> St. Matt. vii. 28, 29.

<sup>33</sup> Jer. ix. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Ezek. ii. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Titus ii. 15.

<sup>36</sup> 2 Tim. i. 7.

<sup>37</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.

vance,—all reverence must be claimed, and all submission. Our Gospel is “the Gospel of the kingdom.”<sup>38</sup> It demands that it be obeyed. It sits, as it were, the throned mind of God Himself, binding all intellects to a meek reception of its statements, and bowing all hearts in reverent subjection to its law. “Unto them that are contentious and do not *obey* the truth;”<sup>38</sup> “But God be thanked that ye have *obeyed* that form of doctrine;”<sup>39</sup>—“What shall the end be of them that *obey* not the Gospel of God?”<sup>40</sup>—are all expressions intimating, that, both on the part of teacher and hearer, allegiance must be rendered to the revealed mind of God. We are not hearers, or believers of the Gospel only, we are its subjects. It is to give the law to our conscience, and the rule to our judgments, and the choice to our wills,—to direct the current of our affections, and to fashion the course of our lives. We live, not under a system of tutelage, where we may object and question, but under the ordinances of a kingdom, where we are required to obey and serve.

All this demands, in the ambassadors of such a message, great “boldness of speech.” We must vindicate the prerogative of God over the whole man. We have not overlooked, and not disparaged the reasoning faculty. Within its proper limits, we have done it all honour. We put a system of revealed truth before it. We allow it to sit in judgment on the sufficiency of the

<sup>38</sup> Rom. ii. 8.<sup>39</sup> Ibid, vi. 17.<sup>40</sup> 1 Thess. i. 8.

external evidences. We bid it compare the general tenour of the disclosures with all the truth it can learn from other sources. And we demand its unquestioning submission, only on points, which, as lying beyond the boundaries of human thought, must be accepted on the evidence and the veracity of God. Our teaching thus restricted, and thus guarded, we may "open our mouth boldly." We have done honour to the whole man,—to the reason that inquires, and to the faith that believes. For, in requiring the one to yield to sufficient evidence, and the other to bow to the decision of an Infinite mind, we feel that we have rendered to man the things that are man's, and "to God the things that are God's."

## CHAPTER III.

### THE INTELLECTUAL DEMANDS OF THE PRESENT AGE.

The general advancement of national intelligence—Literature of the poor—National Schools—Popular lectures—Young Men's literary associations—Reading habits of the mercantile community—Sceptical and rationalizing tendencies of the age—How they are to be met—Objections against a higher intellectual standard of preaching—Objection I. Want of time—Relative importance of different ministerial duties—Objection II. Man's wisdom not necessary so only the Gospel be preached—Answer to this—Objection III. Want of natural ability—The practice of preaching the sermons of others—The limited and lawful use of borrowed materials.

THE line of thought pursued in the last chapter led us to view the work of the Christian teacher, in relation to man as a reasonable being, irrespective of anything, requiring special consideration, which there might be, in the circumstances of his country, or his times. The latter, however, is a point too important to be overlooked. We are preachers not for a bygone age, but

for the present. And we must put ourselves in harmony with the national mind ; must keep abreast with the march of public intelligence ; must not allow it to be said, that, while the popular lecturer is obliged to suppose an advanced condition of knowledge, and when the daily or weekly newspaper is throwing off articles, equal, both in power and finish, to some of the best papers of Junius or the Spectator,—the Gospel teacher ignores all the indications of advancing intelligence, and is content to preach to us in the way, in which his father would have preached fifty years ago.

For proof that something more than this is required of us, and is even essential to the moral power of the pulpit, in the age in which we live, let us glance at some of the signs and tokens we see around us, shewing plainly what the direction of the popular mind is. And this we shall see is *onward*,—steadily, resolutely, in every department,—onward. Every grade of society bears its distinctive and emphatic marks of progress. Look at our poorer classes. Time was, when the libraries of thousands of families, in our land, rarely extended beyond the Bible, the Prayer Book, one or two volumes of domestic economy, and perhaps the Pilgrims' Progress. It is not so now. The skilled artizan will have the best reading from our parish libraries. The better class of our cheap popular and religious serials are eagerly taken in and bound up. Whilst, it has been

remarked, that the strong intellects, in our large manufacturing towns, in the north, have, of late, evinced a marked partiality for the more profound subtleties of Paley and Butler. And all these tendencies, be it remembered, are being fostered by other influences,—by the raised standard of our national schools; by the competitions induced through our pupil-teacher system; by our lectures, on popular subjects, to the working classes; and by the tempting premiums we are holding out for the study of “common things.”

Or, take a class of our people above these, and see what a raised tone of thought has been brought about, among our *young men*, by the establishment of Atheneums, and literary Institutes, and Evening Classes. One of the most marked features of these gatherings is the written essay upon some literary subject, followed by conversational discussion. And the writer of these pages must be understood as giving the result of his personal experience, both in his own parish, and elsewhere, when he avers, that papers are often read by these young men, which, for good English writing, and philosophical accuracy of thought, would put some of our loose and ill-arranged homiletics to shame.

Still more is this progressive intelligence of the times observable, as we come to a class yet higher in the social scale,—our prosperous tradesmen and merchants. Ask any one, at all acquainted with their mental and social habitudes, what are their chief objects of in-



terest? what are their common topics of discourse? what are the books they read? Take a glance at their book-shelves. Do they contain nothing but the transmitted heirloom of their grandfathers' literature, useful to fill up space? or are they like the shelves of Shakspeare's apothecary, where "a beggarly account of empty boxes are thinly scattered to make up a show?" Or do you not rather see a selection of works which discover, in the chooser, a certain unity of mental taste; an intelligent appreciation of some of our best authors; sympathies wide, large, and generous, with all the topics most interesting to human thought?

And, in harmony with this supposition, will be found a good deal of the fire-side discourse of these our merchant-princes. They no longer confine their conversation to the last exciting police report; or even to the last animated debate in Parliament. A lively interest is felt in the last production of the Laureate, or in the questions at issue between conflicting schools of art; whilst some, of yet higher mental sympathies, are found to be taking a large and observant outlook upon the great moral and social questions of the day—the progress of discovery, the harmony of truth with truth, theory with fact, science with Scripture, the consistency of the views put forth, by us, of religious obligation, with the dictates of their own consciousness, or with the intellectual and moral powers of man.

Such are a few indications of the advancing intelli-

gence of all classes of our people. And we owe it to them, owe it to the great cause of intellectual progress, owe it to the vindicated honour of the Gospel as “a reasonable service,” that we keep pace with these outward signs ; that we be not in arrear of the minds we are addressing ; that we do not allow the reproach to be cast upon us, that religious teachers are less generally informed than other teachers, or that the pulpit lags behind the age. We are not saying that we are to follow our congregations into their thousand topics, or to think of catering for their omnivorous mental appetite ; but only that we ought to acquaint ourselves with the temper, and spirit, and prevailing tastes of our people ; with their current habitudes of reading, and speech, and thought ; causing them to look upon us, not as the adversaries, but as the friends and pioneers of progress :—one, with them, in all their social sympathies, whilst, in all their higher aspirations, we are going with them, and going before them for their good.

But in viewing the work of the Christian teacher, in relation to the intellectual phenomena which surround him, there is another and more difficult point to be touched upon,—namely, the necessity of his being thoroughly alive to *the sceptical and rationalizing tendencies of the age*. These tendencies show themselves among high and low, among learned and ignorant, in the playful sallies of the drawing-room and in the bold cavils

of the workshop. Among the poor, this spirit is fostered by tracts,—some, being reproductions of the coarsenesses of Richard Carlile, or Paine, but often mixed with attacks upon our Christianity of a higher and more dangerous kind,—with translated extracts from the subtle scepticism of Germany, and the dissolute and licentious philosophy of France. Some years ago the annual circulation of infidel and vicious publications was estimated at twenty-eight millions; and we are afraid our danger is on the side of under-rating rather than over-rating the resulting evil. Among large associations of operatives, especially, it has been noted that some of the rising men, the first hands, the leading minds in the shop or factory, are tinctured strongly with a sceptical spirit; ready to break up the old foundations and grooves of thought, and, upon a theology of negations, to construct a religion for themselves.

In the higher classes, similar tendencies are found, though, in their case, they take a more covert and subtle form. The Bible is disallowed only *as* the Bible; that is, as an authoritative guide to the religious conscience; as the accredited exponent of Heaven's law and purposes; as the inspired and exclusive medium through which God's spirit communicates to man's spirit, a knowledge of the things which belong to his peace. The disciples of this school have confidence in revelation, not as it is a fact of history, but as it agrees, and only so far as it agrees with what they assume to be the

light of their own consciousness. And this principle is applied to all subjects whatsoever,—not excepting those upon which revelation, and revelation only, can have any information to give. Moral good and evil, the modes of the Divine subsistence, the inspired veracity of the sacred writers, miracles, angels, devils, heaven or hell,—one and all of these are to be believed, just so far as man has other grounds, beside the authority of Scripture, for believing them to be true. The works of Newman and Froude, and the late Theodore Parker, and, in some degree, of Stirling and the Chevalier Bunsen, not to speak of works of more recent date, are indications, mighty, and portentous, of this diminished reverence for ancient truth; of this impatience of any revealed rule of faith; of this determination to dislodge the Scriptures from their prescriptive supremacy over the human conscience, and, indeed, to leave every man to be a Bible to himself,—his own law, his own inspiration, his own God!

Now we are not contending for the expediency of any formal or frequent reference to these sceptical theories, whether open or disguised. As regards open infidelity, we shall never effect very much by naked appeals to the reasoning faculty. It is an evil of the heart more than of the head; and, if cured at all, it must be by means, which are more directly addressed to the heart. The whole philosophy of an abjured Gospel is contained in that expression of the Apostle to the

Romans, "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge."<sup>1</sup> And the natural conscience responds to this sentiment. Men know very well that they do not approach the investigation of religious truth with the same freedom from bias, which they might feel in the investigation of any other truth. Their wishes hurry them on to a foregone conclusion, and self-will is the mother of their creed. And that which they feel in their consciences, we, in our teaching, must not be afraid to assume. We know there are moral reasons which keep men from coming to the light; and, with the certainty that the Gospel which we preach "is not after man," we are not to quit our high vantage ground for naked hypothesis. Let us look at the example of the Great Teacher. In His conversation with Nicodemus, without any apology for what might have appeared, to some, a new dogma in ethical science, He asserts boldly the doctrine of man's responsibility for his belief; makes a man an offender for what, perhaps, the unbeliever would call the honest conclusions of his own mind; and, without saying one word as to the sufficiency of the Gospel evidence, or as to any possible defect of power in us to appreciate that evidence, lays down the universal proposition, that no man can reject the claims of Divine revelation without being, *on that ground alone*, obnoxious to the wrath of God:—"he that believeth not is condemned already."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Romans i. 29.

<sup>2</sup> John iii. 18.

Neither, in the way of direct reference, does it seem expedient, except on rare occasions, to draw attention to the more subtle and disguised infidelity of the rationalizing or German school. It is the same offence to God as its bolder ally is, and comes of the same enmity to His will; and, therefore, it is not well that we should be entirely ignorant of these later heresies. We may not perhaps have the means or the leisure to consult the works, in which the errors themselves are contained. But, from a very slight acquaintance with our periodical literature, the most occupied among us may learn something of their salient forms;—may find how and where they impinge upon our accepted theology. And, by means of the knowledge so acquired, we may, without challenging, to open contest, the invader of our sanctities, interpose a covert defence against his assaults, and buttress and strengthen the parts, where the house of God's truth is in danger of being broken through. Thus, that the Mosaic records are not an allegory; that the facts of Redemption are not a poetic myth; that miracles may be the proper object of an intelligent faith; that the writings of David and the prophets are something more than the inspirations of religious genius; that the controlling influence, by which the words of Christ have been preserved to us, was sufficient for all the purposes of infallible authenticity; that there is a spiritual world; and that, equipped with powers, some for good and some for evil, there are spiritual



agents in it ; and that there is an eternal world, where retribution, the law of all moral agency, leaves to beings, naturally immortal, to eat the fruits of their own adopted and final choice ;—all these are positions, which, from time to time, may profitably be taken up ;—at once depriving those of the contrary part, of the advantage of startling novelty, and pre-occupying the minds of our people by a right understanding of the truth of God.

But to the views, thus opened, of the intellectual signs of our times, and of what the Christian teacher must do to meet them, we anticipate several forms of objection.

I. Thus, we must expect to be met by the objection of *want of time*. With the demands which are constantly made upon us, it will be said,—with our sick to visit, our rich to call upon, our schools to superintend, our daily prayer to read, our committees to attend, our occasional offices to celebrate, our correspondence to keep up, all our local institutions to organize and arrange, besides that which comes upon us daily, the care of the ignorant, and the poor, and them that are out of the way,—how is it possible that we should equip ourselves for this intellectual strife, or keep pace with the ever-widening information of a reading age ?

With an objection of this form, it is manifest there is but one way of dealing. However multitudinous a



man's duties may be, they must admit of being estimated according to some graduated scale of importance. So that if, with *six* duties to perform, he finds he cannot adequately discharge them all, he will lay out his strength upon the one which is most important, and divide his residuary energies and time among the remaining *five*. Now, on this shewing, will any of the miscellaneous works we have spoken of, dispute the palm of precedence with preaching? Will any question be raised, whether a Christian teacher should not first "wait on his teaching?"<sup>3</sup> or whether a pastor's first care should not be to see that his flock are supplied with food?<sup>4</sup> No doubt, the part of our ministerial work which we should all agree to put next to preaching, would be that of domiciliary visitation. And to magnify this part of our office, the honoured adage would be on the lips of many, that "a house-going

<sup>3</sup> Rom xii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> On this point the opinion of an able writer in the *Edinburgh Review* may be worth quoting. "We are willing to admit," he says, "that the duties of the pulpit are not the only duties which claim the attention of the Christian minister; and that his other engagements, in an age like this, are neither few nor small. But we must also contend that as his principal office is that of public instructor, the duties of that office must ever be his chief business; and that to whatever extent he may undertake other engagements, he should sacredly reserve sufficient time for the due discharge of his proper function." Rogers's *Essays*, see *Edinburgh Review*, Oct., 1860, p. 90.

parson makes a church-going people." Yet, in this very saying, it will be seen, that the avowed end of visiting people at their *houses*, is in order to bring them to *church*; and therefore, it is supposed, that we shall provide teaching which shall be worth their coming to church for. For if we do not, they will leave us. We have excited the appetite; and, if it be not satisfied at church, they will go elsewhere. Many a laborious house-to-house dispenser of "milk for babes," has only prepared the way for their going to teachers of another communion afterwards, to find their "strong meat." "Sic vos non vobis!"

No plea of laborious occupation, therefore, "in the streets and lanes of the city," can be allowed, as an excuse, for stinting our congregations of their Sunday nourishment. Those who are present before God to hear us, are not to be sacrificed for the sake of those who stay away: neither, because there are many who will not come to the great supper of the Gospel, must there be no "feast of fat things" prepared for those who do.<sup>5</sup> And, in accordance with this demand for diligent preparation for the pulpit, are the counsels given us in Scripture. "Let your profiting appear unto all men."<sup>6</sup> "Till I come give attendance

<sup>5</sup> "The dogs no doubt must be fed," says Professor Blunt, "but the children must not be starved in order to feed them." Duties of Parish Priest, Lect. v. p. 141.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 13.

to reading," says the Apostle.<sup>7</sup> Give attendance,—προσεχε—lay out all the powers of your mind upon the acquisition of new stores, and new strength. "Reading makes the full man." We are not to allow the well to get too near the bottom; nor the pasture to be cropped too closely; nor spies, whether friendly or unfriendly, to see, in our impoverished commonplaces, the sad nakedness of the land. And this reading, if acquired with a view to being pressed into the service of the sanctuary, cannot be too diversified. All true knowledge may be made helpful to the highest knowledge, and nothing is to be despised. To confirm, to illustrate, to fix attention, to set off a truth with richer adornments, or to place it under more striking lights, we may make use of information of every kind.<sup>8</sup> The best men have used such aids; and have even kept up the habit of varid secular reading for the purpose. "Many of those, who plead want of time for reading, will wonder to hear it said of John Wesley, that during the seasons snatched, by economical management of time, out of the busiest of lives, he not only kept up the high acquirements in academical lore, which he had made his own at Oxford, but mastered most of the modern languages, was well-

<sup>8</sup> "It is an ill mason," says George Herbert, "that refuseth any stone; and there is no knowledge but, in a skilful hand, serveth positively as it is, or else to illustrate some other knowledge." Country Parson, Chap iv.

read in almost every science, and every study to which he could get access, and kept thoroughly up with the lighter literature of the day,—poetry, pamphlets, and works of fiction.”<sup>9</sup>

So wide a range of knowledge as this, perhaps, may be competent to few of us, even if, with Wesley, “for fifty years” we should “rise at four o’clock in the morning.” But the fact shews us how much an eminently devoted teacher felt to be due to his office, even in those days. It is far more demanded in ours. Every teacher, of whatever kind, must be a *reader*. We may be pious, and painstaking, and even well-read in the Scriptures, but if, on points of general intelligence, we cannot, to a certain extent, take rank with other public instructors, whether the religious or the secular teachers of the age, let us be assured that though we may continue to sit in Moses’ seat, few only will sit at our feet to learn.

II. But as against this deference to the growing intelligence of the times, we must anticipate an objection of another form.

We are not careful, it will be said by some, to answer you in this matter. We have no faith in the use of the weapons you are recommending, for furthering the great ends of the Christian ministry. We are satisfied with *preaching the pure Gospel*; and desire

<sup>9</sup> Review of Southey’s *Life of Wesley*. *Guardian*, Dec. 28th 1859.

to have constantly in remembrance that saying of the Apostle Paul ;—“ And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”<sup>10</sup>

We beg to submit that, in the objection thus stated, there is much both of bad theology and bad reasoning. The theology is faulty. It proceeds upon the supposition, that if we are only careful to bring out certain fundamental truths, such as will satisfy the religious aspirations of a few good people, we need care for nothing else. But we should remember that, like the Apostle, we are “ debtors both to the wise and to the unwise.”<sup>11</sup> Our preaching, as we have already argued, is to be not for the *church* only but for the *world* ; for them that are without : in a word, for those hitherto unreclaimed and unattached masses, who will be convinced of Gospel truth as they are convinced of any other truth, that is, by means of reasonable arguments, addressed to them as reasonable men.

Moreover we demur, theologically, to the citation of this oft-quoted passage in the Corinthians, as if it favoured, in the slightest degree, any disparagement, in preaching, of the intellectual faculties. For in regard to “ persuasive words,”—words drawn from human wisdom, or appealing to it,—no man ever used them more than the Apostle Paul. The “ enticing” words he did *not* use, were those of the Corinthian and other

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor ii. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Rom. i. 14.

Grecian sophists,—“the disputers of this world,”<sup>12</sup> as he had just before called them,—men who boasted that, by dint of argument and rhetoric, they could overthrow the plainest truth, and support the most apparent errors,—a class of persons of whom Chrysostom tells us the city was full.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, as against the too common perversion of the passage, it seems sufficient to ask, who can read either the argumentative epistles of St. Paul, or the discourses attributed to him, in the Acts of the Apostles, and say they are deficient either in their power of logical appeal, or in affluence of eloquent illustration?<sup>14</sup>

And the reasoning of this objection is as unsound as its theology. When a certain preacher in Charles the Second's time, made the remark to Dr. South, by way of justification of an illiterate discourse, “God does not stand in need of man's learning,” the witty chaplain is said to have replied, “Neither does God stand in

<sup>12</sup> Marg. 1 Cor. ii. 4.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Cor. i. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Ἡ δὲ καὶ ῥήτόρων πολλῶν ἔμπλεος ἡ πόλις καὶ φιλοσόφων. Pref. in hanc Epistol. See Patrick and Lowth in preface to 1 Cor.

In the other part of this quotation from the Corinthians, “For I determined not to know anything among you,” &c., most scholars are agreed that our English version does not bring out the Apostle's meaning exactly. Dean Alford renders it, “The only thing that I made it definitely my business to know is Jesus Christ,” not “I determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ.” Locke's paraphrase of the passage is, “I determined to use or shew no other knowledge among you.” See *Essays on the Christian Ministry*. Ward, 1853.



need of man's ignorance."<sup>15</sup> The observation may be worth the notice of those in our own day, who interpret the Apostle's repudiation of the sophists, as an absolute interdict upon the employment of human wisdom. Such persons seem to take delight in making a schism in our mental organization; in divorcing the intellect from the affections;—ready to make a scapegoat of the understanding, so only that, in the language of their crude philosophy, they can gain the heart. But the heart never will be thus gained; neither will the understanding submit to such an abject surrender of its claims. Both are parts of God's creation, and the preacher, like the Gospel he is entrusted with, must, on all occasions, honour both.

With those preachers, therefore, who say they are content if they can only bring out evangelical doctrine, no matter in what form presented, nor by what reasoning sustained, we must disclaim all sympathy. Nay more, we say boldly that, if, in view of the onward intellectual movement we have adverted to, we, the preachers of the Gospel, are satisfied to hang back,

<sup>15</sup> The anecdote is often cited, but we think it probable that the foundation of it is a passage in South's sermon on Jeroboam, 1 Kings xiii. 33, 34, where, speaking of admitting illiterate persons to the sacred function, it is said, "This is to give the royal stamp to a piece of lead. I confess that God has no need of man's parts of learning, but certainly then he has much less need of his ignorance and ill behaviour." *Serm. Vol i. Ser. 4 p. 32, 1847.*



and expect our orthodoxy or our goodness to do everything; if we imagine that the thoughtful intellects, in our congregations, will be satisfied by the preparation of a few sheets of unobjectionable and pious dullness; in a word, if we determine to leave to the world, and to the disputers of the world, on the week-day, all the varied illustration, all the careful reasoning, all the exactness of philosophic statement;—whilst we, on the Sunday, are content to eke out our spare and sparse material, by the profuse interlacing of Scripture texts; or else to clothe, with the thinnest and most unsubstantial integuments, some borrowed skeleton,—we shall become guilty of a criminal surrender of the highest function of the ministry,—of disloyalty to the trust, by which God has ordained that He will “save them that believe.”<sup>16</sup> The objection, sometimes urged, that by a laboured argument, or a scientific reference, or an imaginative illustration, we are “shooting over the heads” of our people, does not much commend itself. It is not to be supposed that the entire discourse will consist of such things; and if, of those who are before us, there be any whose minds are peculiarly accessible to such

<sup>16</sup> “What,” asks St. Augustine, “shall the adversaries of the faith be able to state what is *untrue*, with brevity, clearness, and plausibility; while we give so poor an account of the *truth*, that it makes people weary to listen to it, prevents them from getting any insight into its real meaning, and leaves them disinclined to believe it?” De Doct. Christ. iv. 2.

forms of appeal, it is manifest that we are bound to provide for their spiritual sustenance, as much as for that of any of the rest.

Moreover, we believe it is often by ministering to the intellectual requirements of our more thoughtful men, in one part of a sermon, that we win their favourable ear to our spiritual things in another. They give us credit for being as exact and well-informed on our *own* professed topics, as, when needful, we shew that we are careful to be on *theirs*. Whilst, on the other hand, a discovered ignorance on points of secular knowledge, loose reasoning about them, a faulty reference to the facts of history, or a detected inaccuracy of scientific expression, will greatly damage their confidence in us, as teachers, and that, in relation to any truth we may advance. To think of avoiding this danger by keeping altogether off their ground, is impossible. In the department of morals especially, our domain and theirs is, to a great extent, common. And when it is remembered, that there is hardly a well-read merchant's clerk, either in London or in our large towns, who is not, more or less, conversant with the writings of such men as Dugald Stewart, Abercrombie, and Dr. Thomas Brown, it is easy to conceive how grating upon their ears must fall the "confusion worse confounded" of the most familiar metaphysical terms; and how little it will mitigate their contempt for our unscientific clumsiness,

or our ignorance of the laws of moral evidence, to be told that we "PREACH THE GOSPEL."<sup>17</sup>

III. But a more formidable objection remains to be considered than either want of time for our recommendations, or want of sympathy with the necessity for them, namely, *a want of the requisite ability*, on the part of many, to carry our suggestions into effect.

We are not going to provide for the case of inherent intellectual dullness; of such glaring and hopeless incompetency in a man, for the duties of a public instructor, that, only on the supposition of the most egregious parental blindness, or by means of some of the grievous anomalies in our system of church preferment, can we account for such a man having ever been designated to the ministry at all. This is one of those evil things under the sun, for which, if the man is to continue his holy functions, there is no remedy. The mistake is for life. Would that the influence of it could reach to no life beyond the present, and to the lives of none besides his own! But others, younger men, admitted into the sacred profession, there may be,

<sup>17</sup> There is a curious passage in the *De Catechizandis* of Augustine (quoted in Moule's *Christian Oratory* of the first five centuries), shewing a very parallel condition of society, in that day, with regard to those who had "come fresh from the schools of the grammarians and orators," and who were in danger of despising those pious teachers, "whom they may find avoiding faults of conduct more carefully than faults of oratory." *De Catechiz. Rud.* 13.

in whom the inability to write well is *not* inherent ; and by whom, if they will give themselves unto reading, and the study of the best models, there is no reason why the difficulty may not be overcome. They are fresh, we will suppose, from the University. From competitions there, so keen and absorbing as to leave little time for the study of anything else, they pass, if not at a bound, with, at least, only leisure enough for the smallest modicum of theological smattering, into the instant occupation of a teacher's chair. Matter of deep regret is it, that it should be so. And we may hope the numbers are increasing yearly, who, between the time of their academical degree, and their ordination, lay themselves out, not only to become instructed in a wider range of scientific and practical theology, but also in all those parts and accessories of a good literary style, without which, no teacher in our day, whether secular or religious, will be able to hold his own.

At present, however, they are the few who do this. And hence, in answer to our requisitions for a higher and more intellectual cast of preaching, as needful for the age of the schoolmaster, many young preachers may say, and say truly, "Not only must I take up the language of Moses, and say, 'I am not eloquent: I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue ;'<sup>18</sup> but what is yet worse, I am slow of thought; slow of invention ; I have no skill in calling up imaginative 'spirits from the vasty

<sup>18</sup> Exod. iv. 10.

deep;' whilst as to going forth against the strong intellects of our day, armed with your dialectic weapons, I can only say, as David said of Saul's armour, 'I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them.'"<sup>19</sup>

Now we are all aware of *one* way, by which an ill-furnished or inexperienced preacher may get over this difficulty;—a way, too, recommended by Professors in their lectures, by moralists in their essays, and by hearers in their fireside discourse; but not by truth, and not by common honesty. We allude, as will be supposed, to the wholesale and unacknowledged appropriation of the compositions of other men. "As to preaching," says Paley, lecturing at his college, "if your situation requires a sermon, every Sunday, make *one*, and steal *five*."<sup>20</sup> "I heartily wish," says Addison, after commending the practice of Sir Roger de Coverley's chaplain, who had a list of sermons from the best divines, adapted to every Sunday in the year, "that more of your country clergymen would follow this example; . . . it would be not only more easy for themselves, but would edify their people."<sup>21</sup> Whilst that congregations are often heard to express themselves in favour of such a practice, may be inferred from the language of our present Archbishop;—"The observation," he says, "has been made with more fastidious-

<sup>19</sup> 1 Sam. xvii. 39.

<sup>20</sup> *Quarterly Review*, vol. 102, p. 488.

<sup>21</sup> *Spectator*, No. 106. See other quotations in Bridge's *Christian Ministry*, ch. ii., § 1.

ness than good sense, that when there are so many excellent sermons in print, a man is inexcusable who delivers a bad one.”<sup>22</sup>

The objections to the practice here recommended are plain and unanswerable. If a man should avow openly, that he has recourse to it, he becomes the advertizer of his own incompetency for his office, and his moral influence is gone. If he should *not* avow it, but should unblushingly pass off the productions of others, as if they were his own, he stands self-convicted of a moral fraud; and, neither on himself, nor his ministry, can expect a blessing. Further, this practice of borrowing, or even of *adapting*, as it is called, has a bad effect upon a man's own mind. Having begun with such crutches, he will never be able to leave them off. The mind will, by degrees, lose its power of self-exerted thought, and a foundation of mediocrity and feebleness will have been laid for all the teaching of his after life. But even, independently of these considerations, it is certain that a sermon, which a man has thought out, and worked out, and prayed out for himself, will be delivered with far more of real fervour and effectiveness, than any, though a much better sermon, which he may have copied from the works of other men.<sup>23</sup> The fact that it

<sup>22</sup> Apostolical Preaching.

<sup>23</sup> George Herbert says, “Though the world is full of such compositions (i. e., good sermons), yet every man's own is fittest, readiest, and most savoury to him.”



has been written with a specific aim,—for people whom he knows, and for tendencies which he has seen, will give, to the self-prepared sermon, more of freshness, and individuality, and point. Whereas, the copied discourse will come like an undirected letter ;—for anybody or for nobody ; an open circular for a hundred congregations, but a direct message to none.

But is a preacher, and especially a young preacher, obliged to eschew all foreign aids whatever ? “ Spinning his flimsy web,” as the spider does, “ entirely out of his own bowels ? ” Are there not many, of very respectable abilities too, who, if thrown entirely upon their own intellectual resources, and tethered to the limited pasture of their Bible and Concordance, would certainly fall short, in their preaching, of the demands of educated and thoughtful men ? The answer is, no one asks them to be so exclusively original ; no one expects them to be so shortly tethered. On the contrary, there are thrown open, for their use and benefit, all the rich stores of our theological wisdom. Patristic, reformed, puritanical, modern,—with a good conscience for their guide, they may dig into what mines they will. And whatever they find there, so long as it be not servilely appropriated, but is allowed to become incorporated and digested into their own mental processes, this they are at liberty to weave into the texture of their self-spun thought ; and, as far as novelty is expected of them, to present the result of the combination as if it



were something new. Indeed, by combination and rearrangement, the borrowed matter itself becomes new, —being changed and coloured by the mental alembic it has had to pass through, just as the juices of different flowers become one, when they pass into the cell of the industrious bee.

And this limited use of other men's sentiments is one, which, not only some of the best men have recommended, but even some of the wisest men have not been ashamed to practise. In an able article in the *Quarterly Review*, we have an account of the method in which Franklin taught himself to compose. He perused, carefully, a paper in the *Spectator*, and after having thoroughly mastered its spirit and contents, as well as noted down its salient points, he laid it aside. After an interval of a day or two, he took up his notes; and upon his remembered Addisonian type, tried to write an essay upon the same subject himself; the result, of course, serving to shew the excellencies of Addison's style, and the deficiencies of his own.<sup>24</sup> Recommendations of similar plans we find, given to preachers, by some of our ablest divines,—at least until, such time as, in the language of Bishop Burnet, “they are able to go without crutches, and to work without patterns.” Thus, Bishop Bull, Bishop Wilson, and Archbishop Secker, severally recommend, to young preachers, some form of

<sup>24</sup> See *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 102, p. 81.

the analysis plan, in preparing for a sermon,—such as the digest of a homily, or of one of Tillotson's discourses, or of a section of the Whole Duty of Man,—not with a view to their reproduction in any imitated or closely resembling form ; but solely in order that every sermon may contain a certain amount of *positive teaching*,—saving the preacher from the meagreness of his own originality, and ensuring to the hearer, from one source or another, a reasonable allowance of solid mental food.

And, to this end, chiefly do all our recommendations for diligent reading and preparation point. We are not supposing that any amount of industry, in the collection of materials for his subject, will turn a bad preacher into a good one ; will compensate for any original deficiencies of intellectual character ; will make a man a close thinker, in whom the logical faculty is slow, or will impart the fire of an imaginative eloquence to an essentially prosaic mind. All we are contending for is, that, with such educated habits of thinking and writing, as would be required for success in any other profession, any man, however barren of inventive power, may, by giving diligence to reading, always prevent his sermons from being intolerably dull. We may miss the fulness of thought, miss the fertility of illustration ; might have been glad to have seen the subject set off in more attractive phrase, or handled with more of dia-

lectic power, but we should not leave his teaching; and, for the evidence supplied by his sermons of religious care and painstaking, we could not fail to respect the man. If the nourishment supplied be true nourishment, we are taught not to be too fastidious about the way in which it is administered:—"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."<sup>25</sup>

We trust our remarks, in thus urging the need of a higher standard of intelligence and thought, in our sermons, will not be misunderstood. We are counselling no one to attempt a style which is not natural to him,—an attempt which could be attended only with much loss of time, and the most mortifying failure after all. Nor is it necessary. It is a mistake to suppose our congregations are chiefly careful about eloquence. They do not despise the gift; nor should we. But they *do* care about solid matter; *do* care to have put before them, the well-digested results of reading and reflection; *do* care that, as reasoning and thoughtful people, they should have the appetite for increased knowledge ministered to; and, in every sermon, hear something worth carrying away. And this want, it must be our own fault, if we do not, in some measure, supply. We may always incorporate into our discourses, a certain amount of information, which, either in the new aspects under which we present it, or in the new relations with which

<sup>25</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 7.

we combine it, we may fairly presume, those who hear us did not possess before. Of course, the more we can do this from our own self-supplied and unborrowed stores, the better. But, with help from foreign sources, or without it, the matter must be there. "*Rem facias*," must be our rule; we may not add, "*quocunque modo rem*;" because, in the method of appropriation, there are limits,—sacred limits, which, as no candid mind can be at any loss to define, so no religious mind will ever dare to transgress. But within these limits, all the books we can command are open to us, and the public expect us to use them. We are guilty of no dishonesty, literary or moral, when, having determined to write upon a subject, and having, previously and carefully, formed in our own mind a plan of treating it, we proceed to avail ourselves of such extraneous aids as a varied reading may furnish, taking, in substance, a sound argument from this writer, and a remembered illustration from that,—quoting here a corroborative fact of history, and there a confirming extract from a traveller's notes. And we care not to let it be known why we do this. It is not that the truth of the Gospel stands in need of these extrinsic supports; but because we, as its teachers, feel bound to do homage to the eternal principles of man's nature; because we, who are sent forth to turn the hearts and wills of men, will suffer no form of rightful influence to pass out of our hands; in a word, because, as put in trust with the

Gospel, we are careful not to leave room for the reproach,—either to Christianity, that it is the nursed child of ignorance, or, to its teachers, that they follow slowly in the rear of an intellectual age.

## CHAPTER IV.

## PERSUASION, AS THE FINAL OBJECT OF PREACHING.

Lawfulness of appeals to the passions—Our message to the whole man—Coarseness of a former age—The effect of regarding persuasion as the end of preaching—I. In causing a prominence to be given to the more encouraging aspects of the Gospel—Relative efficacy of appeals to hope and fear—II. In moderating the tone of our rebukes for sin—Use of irony—III. In inducing greater caution and charitableness on points of controversy—IV. In the restraint imposed upon different forms of pulpit eccentricity—V. In the endeavour to give unction to our discourses, and generally to minister to a higher tone of personal devoutness.

IN a former chapter we alluded to the rule laid down by Blair, that “the end of all preaching is to persuade men to become good.”<sup>1</sup> So far as relates to the ultimate object of the preacher, no exception, perhaps, will be taken to this definition. We objected only to its incompleteness,—to the apparent setting up of the voluntary and emotional powers, in man, over those of reason and thought. And to this we deem it right to demur. There

<sup>1</sup> See page 18.

can be no schism in our mental organization ; the affections won over, and the judgment holding back ;—the will submitting to a law, and the mind not consenting to it that it is good. Both must be satisfied ; and, therefore, the preacher's work lies with both. No man will be a successful pleader who is not “ apt to teach ; ” and, as a rule, we must convince, by the intelligence of our statements, before, by any devoutness or fervour in our appeals, we shall ever be able to persuade. “ The great fault of rhetoricians,” says Plato, “ is, that they endeavour to acquire the art of persuading men, before they have learned what they have to persuade them of.”<sup>2</sup>

The expression, thus guarded, we may admit that our real business is with men's hearts and consciences. All our former recommendations to read, and to search, and to be ready to meet our thoughtful and able men on their own ground, were but as means to an end. We are not TEACHERS only. Our desire is to PERSUADE men ; to win them over to the side of God and of His truth ; to enlist all the appliances of an earnest and loving oratory, in proving to them, that Christ is the only remedy for our nature's evil, and our nature's

<sup>2</sup> Fenelon's Dialogues. See also the relative prominence given to the different functions of the orator by Cicero. “ Optimus enim orator, qui dicendo animos audientium et docet, et delectat, et permovet. Docere debitum est, delectare honorarium, permovere necessarium.” De Orator. Quoted in Claude's Essay.



need. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did *beseech* you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God."<sup>3</sup>

The remark may suggest the inquiry, first, how far it is lawful, in preaching, to address ourselves directly to the *passions* of an auditory; to try to work upon their affections, by appeals to their yet remaining sympathies with the noble, and the generous, and the pure, and the beautiful; how far we may seek to deepen the impression of moral truth,—either by graphic portraitures of scene and character; or by trying to work upon men's hopes and fears; or even by translating, into the dialect of a reverent and chastened imagination, such revelations as have been given to us of the eternal and the unseen,—the pains of the lost, the glory of the righteous, the fruition and sight of God.

Now great as may be the danger, in this style of composition, to young and unpractised writers especially, of running into vicious excesses,—of bad taste, maudlin sentiment, exaggerated detail, of mistaking prettiness for pathos, and the fanciful for the sublime,—we cannot but think it would be a great loss to the power of the pulpit, if appeals to the feelings or the imagination were ignored. It was found to be a loss, Blair says in his time, when, owing to a "distaste to fanatics and Puritans," sermons had passed too much into "mere reasoning and instruction"—too many preachers, per-

<sup>3</sup> 2. Cor. v. 20.

haps, like himself, doing false and foolish homage to their literary hearers, and so, not only afraid of unction, but afraid of truth. But there is something more required, in our sermons, than mere instruction. Indeed, the very ground, on which we have contended for the necessity of showing deference to the reasoning faculty in man, would apply, equally, to the duty of addressing ourselves to his sentient and emotional nature;—namely, that our message is to the *whole man*,—to all the attributes and powers of his being,—in order that we may engage them all on the side of “pure and undefiled religion.” We are to present to the soul whatever is capable of attracting it; and so long as we do nothing but reason, and explain, and teach, we have not done this. The understanding may be convinced, but the springs of feeling are not touched at all. And though we may not wish to persuade any man, without giving him a reason for his hope, yet one man, brought under alarms of conscience, is a better fruit of our labours than “seven men who could render a reason.”<sup>4</sup>

Neither, if Scripture is to be our model, do we seem to have any warrant for this hard, soulless, unimpassioned form of address. The Holy pages are full of

<sup>4</sup> Another dictum of Cicero will be remembered: “Probare necessitatis est, delectare suavitatis, flectere victoriae,” Orat. 21. See also the same sentiment, in almost the same words, in Aug. de Doct. Christ. iv. 13.

“breathing” thoughts, and “burning” words. Where find we more of soul-stirring and animated appeal, than in the language of the prophets? or more of stern and earnest enthusiasm, than in the sermons of the Baptist? or more of gentle, loving, tenderness, than in the epistles of St. John? or more of deep-swelling, uncontrolled emotion than in the discourses of St. Paul? What word-painting can compare with the parables? What fiction has ever rivalled, in touching truthfulness, the home-scenes of Bethany? What imagination will not fold its wing, in the presence of the revealed glories of the Apocalypse? And when is the spirit bound in more of silent awe, than when hearing, from the lips of the Holy One, of the solemnities of the great day? As already intimated, a man should be very sure of his own judgment, and reasonably reliant on his own powers of discrimination, before he frames any appeal to the passions on these sacred types. Such wild and extravagant outbursts of feeling as are related of some of the followers of Whitefield and Wesley,<sup>5</sup> would disgust by their impropriety, if they did not shock by their profaneness. People are willing to have their feelings

<sup>5</sup> The remark, by some, will be extended to Whitefield himself; but it is probable, we are not proper judges of what the effect of his, so called, extravagancies, may have been, in actual delivery. To us, all license of sobriety must have been transgressed by this great preacher, when, in the midst of a sermon, he apostrophised Gabriel, and exclaimed, “Stop, Gabriel, and take

appealed to. They come to church to be made to feel. But it must be by means which are in harmony with the laws of taste, with the modesty of nature, and with the reverence which is due to holy things.

The expediency of endeavouring to move the feelings of our audience, however, being granted, let us proceed to consider what ought to be the tone and spirit of our preaching, in relation to that which we have assumed to be its ULTIMATE object,—namely, TO PERSUADE MEN TO EMBRACE THE TRUTH OF GOD.

I. Thus, such a view, we think, while making us afraid to keep back anything which might act upon the reasonable fears of our nature, will make us delight in affording room for the play of hope, by giving large scope in our ministration to the more *encouraging aspects of the Gospel*.

Of course, we must address ourselves to the FEARS of those that come to us. John the Baptist did. The Apostles did. Our Lord Himself did. “Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”<sup>6</sup> “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God.”<sup>7</sup> “Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”<sup>8</sup>

with you the news of one sinner converted to God!” Yet David Hume heard that sermon, and declared that the apostrophe to Gabriel was the finest thing he ever heard.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. iii. 7.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Thess. i. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. xxv. 41.

Our Lord knew what was in man; knew that there was in him a deep-seated persuasion of a coming retribution. And the history of all nations, and all ages, testifies to the existence of this feeling. Paganism had its Tartarus; endless torment could find a place in the Platonic philosophy: Hinduism has its ages of endless penance; and Mohammedanism its hell, its seas of fire, its irrevocable destiny;—all witnessing, either to some original tracing upon the human conscience, which no infidelity has been able to obliterate, or else to the echoes of some primeval revelation, making their voice to be heard in all the theologies of mankind.

Still, in addressing ourselves to this original fear of our nature, “we have a more sure word of prophecy.” And, in Scripture, these anticipated retributions appear in harmony with a revealed plan,—stamping, upon the warnings of the Gospel, an impress of unutterable solemnity, and heightening our gratitude to Christ, by shewing us the condemnation from which He has set us free. Nor can it fail to give, to our appeals upon this subject, a yet deeper reality and intenseness, when we urge, that, if there be any Scriptural presentments of the doctrine, more awfully graphic than the rest, they are those which proceeded from the lips of Christ Himself,—from Him, whose sensitiveness and compassion were more than human,—from Him, who came not to destroy men’s lives, nor yet to make them sad; but to redeem

us from the power of the destroyer, and to save us with an everlasting love.

“Knowing the terror of the Lord, then we persuade men.”<sup>9</sup> We may not, with some preachers, deem it well to make the solemnities of the future judgment a frequent subject for rhetorical scene-painting,—but yet no muffled or uncertain sound must our trumpet give forth, with regard to the awful fact itself. It must be, that such representations, as are given us in Scripture, were intended to act upon the will, and are fitted to do so. Indeed, in the case of our Lord, the most solemn denunciations appear but as love in another form. So that, if He dwell sometimes on the future portion of the ungodly,—the worm, and the fire, and the darkness, and the gnashing teeth,—yet is this only to prevail with us to look at the eternal world on its other side, and see the spiritual glory of the righteous,—fellowship with angels, a seat on the throne, a sight of God.

And hence the other part of our recommendation, that, together with the frequency of harsher presentments, we should aim especially to bring out the *more attractive features* of the Gospel. Fear is a very urgent stimulant to action no doubt; and, in its operation, more immediate; but it is not so noble a passion as hope, not so expansive, not so enduring. Arguments addressed to hope, also, find a readier response in the universal heart. They flatter our capabilities for good,

<sup>9</sup> 2 Cor. v. 11. .

and that always pleases. But if you appeal to the fears of a man,—especially if anything of asperity mingle with the warning,—he thinks you mean to threaten him. And he gets angry, and will none of your reproof. Cowper, speaking of the over-hard style, adopted by some preachers, says, in one of his letters, “No man was ever yet scolded out of his sins.” And Cecil, speaking on the same subject, says,—“I feel myself repelled, if anything chills, goads, or urges me; this is my nature, and I see it to be very much the nature of others. But let me hear ‘Son of man, thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again, saith the Lord,’ and I am melted and subdued.”

And higher testimonies favour a like conclusion. Taking the Acts of the Apostles, and tracing the effects of the outpouring of the Spirit, in connection with the preached word, we cannot fail to notice that the agency which wrought so powerfully upon the conscience of the first converts, was the allurements of “love,”—the hidden power of the “bands,”<sup>10</sup>—a working upon the grateful affections of the sinner, by an exhibition of the mysterious compassion of the Crucified,—even from His throne in heaven, charging His faithful servants to say, “And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.”<sup>11</sup> Even in the great sermon on the day of Pentecost, pungent and searching as are its appeals to the conscience, there is a great

<sup>10</sup> Hos. xi. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Acts iii. 17.



intermixture of moral kindness. There is a wide opening of mercy for the returning penitent; and, interwoven with an address to the nation, of stern and severe fidelity, is a touching recital of the grand and simple facts of redemption,—of a Saviour dying to procure them pardon, and a Spirit promised to give them life. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. And when they heard this, they were pricked to the heart, and said, Men and brethren what shall we do?”<sup>12</sup>

And so in other Scriptures. There is no keeping back of strong and startling appeals to the fears of men. On the contrary, it is assumed that, in their degree and place, the terrors of the future world must be insisted upon as much as any other part of the counsel of God. The marked feature of New Testament teaching, in this respect, is, that while Paul and the other Apostles were, what would be called, “alarming” preachers, yet that, except in the case of the hardened and the hypocrite, it was their wont to alarm *tenderly*. “Speaking the truth in love,”<sup>13</sup> was their aim. Their severest denunciations were often mingled with tears. “For many walk of whom I have told you often, and *and now tell you even weeping*, that they are the enemies of the cross

<sup>12</sup> Acts ii. 37. 38.

<sup>13</sup> Eph. iv. 15.

of Christ ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame.”<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, to the efficacy of appeals made to the grateful affections of those we are dealing with, it is probable we can most of us testify, from the results of our pastoral experience. Even with regard to persons of the most hardened character, our happiest memories of success, will, we think, be found associated with seasons, when there was a peculiar tenderness upon our own spirit—when our lips seemed spell-bound to one theme, the love and loveliness of Christ ; as if, while we were speaking, we had touched a chord of dormant and forgotten sympathies, and, by appealing to the better feelings of the man’s heart, had heaped coals of fire on his head. As Dryden well expresses it:—

7 “To threats, the stubborn sinner oft is hard,  
Wrapt in his crimes, against the storm prepared ;  
But when the milder beams of mercy play,  
He melts, and throws his cumbrous cloak away.”<sup>15</sup>

And in the same mould, to a considerable extent, must be cast our teaching from the pulpit. With all the sterner and more terrific aspects of Gospel truth, we

<sup>14</sup> Phil. iii. 18, 19. “Circumlineatur poculum cælestis sapientiæ melle, ut possint ab imprudentibus amara remedia sine offensione parari.” Lactant

<sup>15</sup> Dryden, *Religio Laici*.

shall be anxious to mingle a touch of the conciliatory and the tender. After the example of our Divine Master, having spoken of the judgment to come, and declared that "they that have done evil shall rise to the resurrection of damnation," we shall not be long before we follow up our statement with that language of remonstrant, but plaintive tenderness, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."<sup>16</sup> And this is the true art of moral suasion. Our object is not to drive, but to draw; not to irritate, but to soften; to obtain such an absolute concurrence of the moral affections, as that, when bringing the sinner effectually under the power of Gospel captivity, it shall be his *own* act to bind on the yoke. Both our work, and the manner of it, are described by the wise man in one happy expression, "He that WINNETH souls is wise."<sup>17</sup>

II. Again, with *persuasion* in view, as the ultimate end of our ministry, we shall have a godly jealousy of the tone in which we *administer rebukes*; shall stand in awe of anything like angry and irritating declamation against the sins of the times; and shall always see that we know "what spirit we are of," before, even against the most reprehensible practices, we throw out the caustic and derisive sneer.

The admission may be a very humbling one, but we cannot disguise from ourselves, that it is very grateful

<sup>16</sup> John vii., comp. ver. 28 and 40.

<sup>17</sup> Prov. xi. 30.

to our fallen nature, to administer censure ; that there is a pleasure, in holding up social mischiefs to reprobation, which, for the time, will almost quench our sorrow for the sin. And when our profession is one, which makes a duty of this pleasure, the temptation to us is very strong to transgress the limits of a holy and discerning charity ; and to adopt a tone of speaking, more likely to elicit extenuating pleas for the offender, than sympathy with our exaggerated rebuke. Least of all, will one of the offenders himself, if present, be won by this extravagance of censure. He sees that, while professing a desire to reclaim him from some sinful habit, you are putting his sin in the worst light you can ;—misrepresenting its character ; overstating its mischiefs ; intent only on making the jet blacker than it is ; and seeming to rejoice, if you can fix, on all who yield to the habit, the brand of eternal outlawry from the presence of God. And what is the consequence ? Why, that you have exasperated the man, hardened him, made him retreat under cover of a conscious and acknowledged injustice ; and have alienated him, more than ever, from a system, which, only on the overthrow of all gradations of misdoing, he will allege, can challenge the acceptance of mankind.

No : “ the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” There is a fatal facility which some have of dealing in hard words. Their tongue is like a sharp razor. “ Adder’s poison is under their lips.”

And, after they have said some stinging or crushing thing, you see the rancour and the bitterness, propagated from one to another, among the hearers, with a dreadful sympathy,—betokening far more of joy at the condemnation of the fallen, than of thankfulness for the grace which enables themselves to stand. The prevalence of such a tone, in our ministrations, also, is likely to be damaging in another way. By many, and even devout minds, it will be interpreted as too faithful an echo of the tone of our inner life; telling of something perturbed, and restless, and sorely disquieted there; the absence in us, of “that fruit of righteousness which is sown in peace of them that make peace.”<sup>18</sup> But let this view of *persuasion*, as the final object of our

<sup>18</sup> That acute observer, Currer Bell, in one of her graphic portraiture, evidently drawn from life, thus speaks of a sermon by a very effective pulpit orator. “The heart was thrilled, the mind astonished, by the power of the preacher: neither were softened. Throughout there was a strange bitterness; an absence of consolatory gentleness. . . . When he had done, instead of feeling better, calmer, more enlightened by his discourse, I experienced an inexpressible sadness; for it seemed to me—I know not whether equally so to others—that the eloquence to which I had been listening, had sprung from a depth where lay turbid depths of disappointment, where moved troubling impulses of insatiate yearnings, and disquieting aspirations. I was sure St. John Rivers—pure-minded, conscientious, zealous as he was—*had not yet found that peace of God which passeth all understanding*—he had no more found it, I thought, than had I, with my concealed and burning regrets for my broken idol, and lost elysium.” Jane Eyre, chap. xxx.

preaching, be kept before us, and all our denunciations of evil will be tempered with a chastened sobriety,—with that wisdom from above, which is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated.” If to the word and Spirit of Christ we look to give point to our reproof, to “the meekness and gentleness of Christ,” we trust to take off the offensive keenness of its edge. “We were gentle among you,” says the Apostle to the Thessalonians, “as a nurse cherisheth her children;”<sup>19</sup> whilst, after one of the severest epistles he had ever penned, we have him saying, “I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before that ye are in our hearts, to die and live with you.”<sup>20</sup>

Especially, in dealing with our fellow sinners, shall we be sparing in the use of *ridicule*,—never, but in very extreme cases, presuming to have recourse to irony, or the barbed shafts of worldly scorn. Ridicule is no test of truth; and, from the feelings unavoidably called forth by it, the pulpit is the last place where it can be safely employed. That occasions may arise for saying a severe thing,—as when some mischievous or taking fallacy has to be exposed, or, perhaps, in order to the silencing of a sneer on the other side,—there can be no doubt. But, as a rule, for Elijah’s irony, we ought to be sure we have either Elijah’s wisdom, or Elijah’s warrant. *Our* safer model is to be found in the New

<sup>19</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 7.

<sup>20</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 3.



Testament; ordering our reproofs after the example of Him, who loved while He chided; who pitied, while He blamed; and who, when remonstrance could do no more, continued to plead and pray, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

III. Further, if *persuasion*,—the single desire to lead men to repentance, be the great aim of the preacher, he will be very watchful of his own spirit, in dealing with *subjects of religious controversy*.

In the first place, he will satisfy himself that a clear case of expediency has arisen, before he takes up such subjects at all. For they are only the few of his hearers who care about them; whilst, of those who *do* care, the most keenly interested in the discussion, are often those who understand it least; and who are chiefly on the look out for their favourite catch-words, to see that their teacher is true to his Shibboleth, and displays the proper badge of his school. Besides, as a rule, people wish to have something better, something that will minister consolation to them under life's temptations, and life's trials. "The sheep are looking up to be fed." Regarded as a schoolman's quarrel, what are they to the "five points," or the "five points" to them? Better they should have to say of us, as the Pythoness did of Paul and Silas, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way of salvation."

But occasions may arise, sometimes, for taking up



the arms of the polemic, such as false teaching in the neighbourhood; or the prevalence around us of grievous schism; or the compassing of sea and land, by active agents, to make proselytes to an erring and fallen church. And then the errors must be met honestly, fairly, and with an outspoken boldness. Strangely enough, however, these grosser errors are not the things which call forth our theological bitternesses most. Our feuds are often sorest, where the *real* differences at issue are the least. And it is, in view of this infirmity, that the remembrance of our object being to *persuade* men, will be so beneficial to us. It will moderate or keep down all asperity of statement; will make us afraid of any needless offence-giving in our refutations; will suggest the need of a large, tolerant, and discerning charity, in relation to all diversities, whether of faith or practice, among Christians, not plainly and demonstrably vital to the truth of God.<sup>21</sup> We cannot always know who may be among our congregations; but this we know, that there are none whom we do not wish to save. And

<sup>21</sup> Lord Bacon, quoting from an ancient Father, observes: "Christ's coat, indeed, had no seam: but the Church's vesture was of divers colours; whereupon he saith 'In veste varietas sit, scissura non sit;' they be two things, unity and uniformity." *Essays. Of unity in religion.* See also some excellent remarks on the same subject in a visitation sermon, entitled, "Shibboleth," by the Rev. Sanderson Robins, Vicar of St. Peter's, Isle of Thanet, and Rural Dean. Longman, 1858.

we little think the mischief we may be doing, when, to please a small section, it may be, of our own people, we fling broad-cast the seeds of theological party ; or make rude and rough onslaught on men's prejudices, and weaknesses, and educational mistakes ; or try to make the differences, among the members of the Christian body, appear greater than they are ;—tying up our Christianity to formulæ, and symbols, and the very narrowest grooves of religious thought and feeling ; and leaving nothing but a lost immortality for those who are but one hair's breadth without the lines.

Now, surely, there is neither policy nor philosophy in this course. Not policy ; for if the mistakes *be* mistakes, and nothing more, what is so likely to induce obstinacy in retaining them, as the angry magnifying of them into deadly heresies ? Not philosophy ; for it is setting ourselves against a result, which it is the very tendency of an age of religious activity to produce. Divisions and sect-makings are the invariable concomitants of revivals. We have an increase in the number of our religious thinkers ; and, as a natural consequence, there arise more shades and more diversities of religious thought. Nor are such results, undesirable as they are in themselves, altogether without their incidental use. They tend to stir up the stagnant elements of society ; and, like the counter-currents which minister to the salutary properties of the ocean, may help to keep our

theology from subsiding into the dead sea of Romish unity. At all events, as we cannot prevent these divisions, our great care should be not to exaggerate them; not to overstate them; not to be ever throwing “adder’s fork and blind-worm’s sting” into the cauldron of religious bitterness, by setting up tests of truth which are no tests, or by charging consequences upon a doctrine, which, its advocates neither hold nor see. The world is wide enough; and varied enough is the preacher’s choice of themes. If, therefore, our aim be to preach a full Gospel, and “by manifestation of the truth to commend ourselves to every man’s conscience,” we shall have little time for the strife of tongues,—and as little heart. The sharp arrows of controversy may silence the lips, but they are the courtesies of controversy that touch the heart. “Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God; even as I please men in all things; not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.”<sup>22</sup>

IV. Once more, we see a benefit in this steady regard to *persuasion*, as the scope of our ministrations, on account of the many *unprofitable* things, *impertinent* things, *self-glorifying things*, which, while our eye is upon that mark, we shall sedulously endeavour to exclude.

Thus it will keep us from the affectation of great

<sup>22</sup> 1 Cor. x. 32, 33.

learning; as seen in the offensive parade of our critical industry and scholarship; in needless cavils at the want of accuracy in our received translation; in a frequent reference to the treasures of patristic divinity; in a pedantic introduction, into our sermons, of the technicalities of abstract science; in a constant reference to the first difficulties of morals,—“fixed fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute.”<sup>23</sup> It will keep us from those foolish displays of dialectic skill, which make us delight in heaping proof upon proof in support of propositions, about which nobody entertains any doubt; calling up the ghosts of slain and forgotten heresies, till we have almost reasoned people out of their Christianity; and, perhaps, causing them to say, as Pitt, with less reason, said, after reading Butler, “I never thought there were so many objections against a Divine revelation before.” It will keep us from many offences against pulpit dignity,—from the homely coarsenesses of the Reformation period,<sup>24</sup>—from the ill-timed jest, the

<sup>23</sup> “Nothing is more preposterous,” South says, “than for those who are professedly aiming at men's hearts, to miss the mark by shooting over their heads.” *Sermons*, vol iv., p. 152.

<sup>24</sup> Latimer's sermons, almost the only complete sermons we have of the pulpit oratory of that time, are full of familiar, not to say mean images: tales of Robin Hood, or of the Goodwin Sands, or of an execution at Oxford, or of the woman going to church at St. Thomas of Acres, because she could not get a wink of sleep at any other place, mixed up with puns the most idle, and similes the most unsavoury.” *Blunt's Sketch of the Reformation*, p. 175.

witty anecdote, the affected quaintness, the mean and low illustration which violates, by its uncouthness, all the laws of taste, and compromises, by its profaneness, all the sanctities of the house of prayer. "Of all preaching in the world," says Baxter, "that speaks not stark lies, I hate that preaching which tendeth to make the hearers laugh, or to move their minds with tickling levity, and affect them, as stage-players use to do, instead of affecting them with a holy reverence for the name of God."<sup>25</sup>

And the same consideration will exercise a restraint upon faults of a lesser kind,—faults, often shewing themselves in young and inventive minds. We wish to *persuade* men; we shall see it is not the way to persuade them, to be always having recourse to some eccentric straining after originality;—such as presenting a familiar passage of Scripture in some new and startling light; or choosing some difficult text, and discovering a meaning which no one had ever seen before; or stretching, beyond all permitted bounds, the limits of sober accommodation, so that people hardly know where the revelation begins, and the riddle ends,—when *Œdipus* speaks, and when the oracle of God. It is not the way to *persuade* them, to be anxious to press the accidents of a Scriptural illustration too

far ; to be always turning metaphor into allegory, and Eastern poetry into subtle myth,—hunting to the death the most minute accessories of a parable ; and, as it were, making awful parody on words Divine. It is not the way to *persuade* them, to keep their minds in torturing suspense on the horns of a self-constructed dilemma, just that more credit may accrue to ourselves, for the ease and ingenuity with which, at last, we set them free. No ; attract attention to ourselves by such things we may ; lay an arrest on the hearer's drowsiness we may ; but as to drawing them to Christ ; or touching to finer issues the springs of devout emotion ; or producing any permanent effect upon the heart and conscience,—we have done nothing. Our clevernesses have been, not lost labour only, not a warfare of spent arrows only,—they become a sinful misuse of a great opportunity,—a solemn and sad impertinence.

V. As subsidiary to the great end of moral suasion, however, there is one positive quality in preaching, which we cannot afford to pass unnoticed. We allude to that element in a sermon which Cardinal Maury calls the “Christian pathos,” or, which the French preachers generally, and we, after them, are accustomed to describe as “*unction*.” There is a want of appositeness in this latter phrase, seeing that it gives to something, in the spirit or language of the preacher, a name, which is more properly descriptive of an effect that should follow upon



his sermon ; namely, the word made effectual through the “anointing” of the Holy One. Still, for all practical purposes, we sufficiently understand what is meant by “unction,” in a sermon. It is the savour of a devout earnestness ; the echo of soul-deep thoughts ; the glow of that holy fervour, which will warm though it does not shine ; in a word, the casting of ourselves upon the sympathies of the religious heart, assured that the hearers, if they do not agree with the *preacher*, cannot fail to feel with the *man*. And, beyond this, we attempt not to define “unction.” Philosophers may try to explain it, but it is too subtle for the applications of their rude analysis. The pulpit artist may try to imitate it, but in his tearful and maudlin softness, all men will see the counterfeit. No ; it is anointing ; Heaven’s anointing,—secret, silent, penetrating, powerful. “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.”<sup>26</sup>

The mention of this subject may not unsuitably invite a plan for one general reflection,—applicable to all that has gone before, as well as to all that shall come after,—namely, how futile will be all watchful attention to the signs of the times, how profitless the highest attainments of human rhetoric, how unblessed the power to “speak with the tongues of men and of angels,” without the higher qualifications of personal devoutness,

<sup>26</sup> Deut. xxxii 2.



and the bringing to our work much of special and fervent prayer. Surely, if Quintilian could say that none but a good man could ever be a true orator ; if Aristotle made a high standard of moral principle to be the foremost requisite to rhetorical success ; if, of Pericles, it is declared, that he never ascended the rostrum without imploring a blessing from the gods,—much more should we, under the Gospel, expect to see the greatest success allied with the highest tone of personal religion, and to find that a praying heart is the great secret of a persuasive tongue.

And, as a rule, it is so found. Of Whitefield, the most effective preacher of his day, it is said, that his preparation for the pulpit seemed to be “the bathing of his spirit in heavenly influences.” It was the agony of prayer, and not the agony of mental labour, which made him the wonder of his times ; causing him to communicate such a hallowed impulse to all who heard him, that, even those who were offended at his want of taste, could not resist the fascinating power of his devoutness. And the same thing is seen to this day. It is not the most intellectual ministry which is chiefly honoured of God,—recommended, though it be, by all that is faithful in statement, and all that is attractive in style. It is the message of the man of prayer ; of one who has been wrestling with God for a blessing beforehand ; of one who looks upon the pulpit as such an “awful place,” that, while there, he can forget self, for-

get reputation, forget everything, but the one solemn fact, that his words have immortality,—made by no choice or power of his own, “a savour of life unto life, or, of death unto death.”<sup>27</sup>

And thus, it is not too much to say, that the chief source and strength of our pulpit successes will be found to consist in our “continuing instant in prayer.” If we cannot *preach* our people *into* faith in Christ, we may, God helping us, *pray* them *out* of their unbelief,—*pray* them out of their worldly spirit,—*pray* them out of those moral eninities and reluctances, which will not suffer the preached word to speed. At all events, from the cultivation of such a habit, we are quite sure of benefit to ourselves. The great danger of our ministry, in these days, is that of over-much activity ; of falling into a sort of idolatry of duties ; of giving so much time to the keeping of other vineyards, as to have little or no time left for the culture of our own.<sup>28</sup> And this, sooner or later, must have a most disastrous effect upon the religious character. Indeed, we fear it has had its effect already. Our best men fall short of the spiritual stature of former days ;—aye, as short of Newton, and Romaine, and Scott, as of Andrewes, and Ken, and George Herbert. And thus we are in danger of lapsing imperceptibly into a mere professional piety ; of being content to live on the credit of a bygone devoutness ;—of substituting a bustling excitement for the tenderness of spirit, which

<sup>27</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 16.

<sup>28</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 13.

accompanied our Ordination solemnities, and of filling up with preachings, the seasons which, in our more spiritual days, we were wont to spend alone with God. That the devotions of the closet should ever encroach upon the needful preparation for the pulpit, is a danger we hold to be, of very remote contingency. Enthusiasts there may be who will pervert the oft-quoted axiom, “*Bene orasse est bene studuisse.*” But there is One that will judge them for such perversions,—even that word which saith, “This ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone.” The ruling of Scripture is plain enough, with regard to both duties. To the man who should set lightly by the human accessories of his ministry, it issues the peremptory command, “Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”<sup>29</sup> To him who should make them, or *any* human accessories, a substitute for those which are Divine, it holds up the example of those first founders of the faith, who said, “We will give ourselves continually to prayer.”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Canticles i. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Acts vi. 4

## CHAPTER V.

## THE PARTS AND ARRANGEMENT OF A SERMON.

Definitions of a sermon — The different kinds — I. The text— Rules in relation to it—I. Should be chosen with a view to being used—II. Should be used in their own proper sense—III. Caution in the use of startling texts, and the limits of accommodation—II. The Exordium—Should be short—Calculated to awaken attention—Lead naturally to the subject to be discussed—III. General discussion of the subject—Necessity of unity—Arrangement of parts—Examples of modes of discussion—The question of announced divisions—How far essential—The necessity of a clearly indicated line of thought—IV. The peroration—The two opposite faults: I. Of tediousness, II. Of abruptness—Importance of appeals to the conscience, in a conclusion.

THE foregoing chapters have touched chiefly upon the OBJECT of preaching,—what it aims at, and what it is ordained of God to do. And, in relation to the hearers, this object we have seen is to convince of sin, to move to repentance, to gather in the dispersed ones to the fold of Christ, to build up in faith, and hope, and love, and holiness, the whole church of God. We pass, naturally, from this to another inquiry,—the nature of the instrument with which this great work is to be

done? in other words, to a consideration of the question, WHAT IS A SERMON?

And the following answers are returned by respected authorities: "A sermon," says Dr. Johnson, "is a discourse of instruction, pronounced by a divine, for the edification of the people."<sup>1</sup> "A sermon," writes another, "is a discourse, delivered in public, for the purpose of religious instruction and improvement; or a persuasive oration."<sup>2</sup> A third tells us, "Sermons are orations or discourses delivered by the clergy of the Christian church, in their religious assemblies."<sup>3</sup>

The answers do not give us much information beyond this,—that the sermon is a discourse "*sui generis*." Moulded on the plan of a direct address to an audience, it differs from the *essay*. Demanding, on every occasion, a certain amount of positive and well-considered teaching, it is distinguished from the *popular harangue*. And yet it partakes of the nature of both these kinds of composition,—must make room for the didactic qualities, required by one of them, as well as for the rhetorical element, which is indispensable to the other. Is it any wonder that men, who, at the Universities, have never been taught the philosophy of good writing at all, should so often fail in a style of composition,

<sup>1</sup> Dict. in verb. 4to.

<sup>2</sup> Rees's Encyclop. in verb.

<sup>3</sup> Dean Hook's Church Dict. Verb. Sermon

which, both for its difficulties and its peculiarities, is unlike to anything else ?

But recurring to our question, "What is a sermon, as it is found among us in actual practice ?" And, generally, we may answer, it is a hortatory address to the religious conscience, founded upon some passage in the word of God. The passage, chosen for this purpose, may be longer or shorter ;—that is, may be either a ground-plan, on which to construct a scheme of expository or deductive truth ; or it may be a mere motto, on which to hang the discussion of some abstract point of theology,—and to which therefore, it stands only in the same kind of titular relation, as might be claimed for some hundred texts besides. If the passage, selected for illustration, extend to the length of several consecutive verses, such for instance, as one of our Lord's parables, or the narrative of some remarkable fact,—we get a *third* form of pulpit exercise, and the discourse is neither a *text sermon*, nor a *subject sermon*, but an *exposition*.

Reserving, for a future chapter, some remarks on the *exposition* or *homily*, it may not be amiss to moot one or two points, connected with the structure and arrangement of the ordinary sermon,—whether it take the form of a scheme of inferential teaching, such as would arise fairly and naturally out of the discussion of the text ; or that of a discourse, upon some isolated topic of Christian faith or practice, of which the text, it may be, is but a mere general announcement.

I. And first with regard to the choice of a text. The practice of commencing a discourse with a sentence from the sacred volume, may be said to be derived from the time of Ezra ; who, as we learn from Nehemiah, introduced the practice of ascending a pulpit, and, after addressing a prayer to God, to which the people said, Amen, opened the book of the law ; and having read a passage therefrom, “gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading.”<sup>4</sup> In the Christian Church, the use of a passage of Scripture, as the ground of a discourse ;—an “auctoritee,” as Chaucer tell us it was called in his time,<sup>5</sup>—is, probably, coeval with the set discourse itself ; though, in the sermons of the great preachers, both of the Eastern and Western Churches, we find sometimes two texts prefixed, and sometimes none at all. In the modern sermon, the use of a text is all but universal ; and the reasons are many which make us desire that the practice should continue. It is an act of homage to the Divine condescension, in speaking to us through a written revelation. It is an emphatic recognition of that Revelation, as the only authoritative interpreter of moral truth. It is a protest against the introduction, into our discourses, of anything impertinent or unseemly. It is a joint confession of the whole congregation,—on the part of

<sup>4</sup> Neh. viii. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Hence a sermon is called “*exposito auctoritatis*.” See Hook’s Dictionary in verb. Text.



hearers, that they have come to hear what the Lord God will say unto them; on the part of the teacher, that he "cannot go beyond the word of the Lord to say less or more."

And, in the choice of texts also, there are reasons for exercising a wise discrimination. By the poor, especially, the text is that which is remembered better than anything else. They often mark it in their Bibles; and if any savour of holy impression have been left upon their minds, by the sermon, they will recur to the passage again and again,—reviving, by means thereof, certain accompanying trains of religious thought and feeling, even when, of the sermon itself, perhaps, they can recall no more than could Nebuchadnezzar of his lapsed midnight dream. And the same beautiful law of suggestion is found to operate in many others, besides the poor. Men, of the most devout and thoughtful order of mind, have been known to retain lively and enduring associations with particular passages of the Word of God. With discourses from such passages, perhaps, they are able to connect some clearer views of a great religious mystery; or a better understanding of some practical duty of the Christian life; or the initiating of some personal rule or habit, which they could never afterwards be persuaded to abandon. Sometimes, indeed, these passages are hallowed by yet more precious memories. And a man cannot hear a particular text quoted, without being carried back, involuntarily, to

some crisis in his spiritual history, when “a certain man drew a bow at a venture ;” and a sermon from that text entered, like a winged arrow, into his soul.

What then are the cautionary hints we have to offer on the choice of texts ? We answer,—

1. First, that they be chosen with *a view to being used*. The text ought not to be a mere sacred preface ; something announced, as it was said of Bourdaloue, only to show the preacher’s ability in getting rid of it as soon as possible. As a rule, every text we choose, should contain a Divine thought of which we seek to penetrate the meaning, in order that we may apply it to the elucidation of some point of doctrine, or to the enforcement of some rule of life. And the practice of some preachers, of naming the text, and then standing as far out from it, as a ship would do from a dangerous coast,—only deigning to use a text at all,—just as writers in a review, often condescend to notice a new book, by placing the title of it at the head of some laboured treatise,—if not a “handling of the Word of God deceitfully,” is, at least, a dealing not candidly, with those who come to have that word explained. The ‘keeping close to one’s text,’ is an expression, which has passed into a proverb among us ; and, as we believe, expresses the disappointment which the intelligent hearer feels, when, instead of a logical development of ideas, indigenous to the subject which has been announced, he is treated

with something wholly foreign to it,—with a mere medley of exotic thoughts and beautiful impertinencies.

We are aware that a certain license, in this respect, must be allowed in the case of what are called "*subject* sermons,"—where the design is to establish some fundamental truth of theology, for which the range of illustration, presented by any single text of Scripture, might hardly seem to suffice. But there is abundant scope for discrimination, even in this case. There is no great topic, in the domain of moral truth, for which, there are not to be found apposite texts in the Word of God,—texts, too, which so far from embarrassing a preacher, in his larger discussions of the subject, would, in the hands of a skilled workman, impart an affluence to his illustrations, and clothe his arguments with power. For example, what striking phases, of the misery and evils of idolatry would be evolved, by following out, in all its significant and suggestive bearings, such a text as "Without God in the world!"<sup>6</sup> Or who, with the widest basis of argument he could desire, for proving the certainty of a future retribution, could feel that he was at all hampered in the use of his weapons, because the text he had proposed to discuss, was "Let both grow together unto the harvest."<sup>7</sup>

We owe it, then, to Scripture, as well as to our hearers, both to choose a suitable text and to discuss it fairly. The 'fugitive preachers,' as they have been sometimes

<sup>6</sup> Eph. ii. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. xiii. 30.

called, are but too likely to make fugitive hearers,—the thoughts of the hearers flying as far away from the sermon, as the sermon of the preacher flies away from his text. At all events, as Bishop Burnet says, “a sermon, before which a text seems only to be read as a decent introduction, but to which no regard is had in the progress of it, will have but little efficacy.” People will see that “the sermon was not made for the text,” but that a text had “to be found out for the sermon.”<sup>8</sup>

2. We offer another caution. Not only must we make use of the text, but care must be taken that we make the *right* use. If hearers are displeased at the almost utter ignoring of a text, much more will they take offence, if they find, that, through ignorance, or carelessness, or zeal for a dogma, the text has been wrested to a sense, which it was never intended to bear. Many a man has come to have doubts, even of a true doctrine of the faith, because a sermon he has heard, in support of it, was founded on a misinterpreted or inapposite text. A preacher may, or may not be right, for instance, in his views of the predestinarian hypothesis; but it speaks

<sup>8</sup> Pastoral Care, ch. ix. Barrow, among English, and Saurin, among French Divines, are much given to the use of “subject sermons;” but they usually select a full text, and discuss it fully, in its relations to their announced topic. See Barrow on the Duty of Prayer, from 1 Thes. v. 17, or on the profitableness of Godliness, from 1 Tim. iv. 8, and the several sermons of Saurin on the Divine Attributes.

ill for his honesty, or ill for his scholarship, if, as his warrant for the most bald and unrestricted presentment of that dogma, he chooses for his text the words, "And the Lord added to the church daily, such as *should be* saved."<sup>9</sup> And right as it would be to tell our people that many of the revealed parts of Scripture cannot be brought down to the level of human thought, it would betray an unpardonable carelessness, to say the least of it, to take the well known passage in Peter, and use it, as if it were of *Paul's epistles*, the words were used, "in which are many things hard to be understood."<sup>10</sup> Sermons on the sinfulness of rash extremes, should not be preached from the text, "Let your *moderation* be known unto all men." Neither is it honest to quote, as warrant for the most elastic breadth of dogmatic charity, the words "Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in *sincerity*."<sup>11</sup>

Other examples will occur. The practical cautions suggested by them are obvious. They show the necessity of submitting every text we are going to preach from, to a process of rigorous analysis,—of endeavouring by means of all the consultative aids in our power,

<sup>9</sup> Acts ii. 47. "The phrase of the original is τοὺς σωζομένους where the tense employed, shews that the expression applies only to those who are in a state of salvation, as τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις (1 Cor. i. 18) applies to the opposite." See Blunt's Duties of the Parish Priest, Lect. ii., p. 52.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 16. See the construction, ἐν οἷς not ἐν αἷς.

<sup>11</sup> See Phil. iv. 5. τὸ ἐπιεικὲς and Eph. vi. 24. ἀφθαρσία.

whether of text, context, or exegesis, to get at "the mind of the Spirit,"—the whole Divine idea, such as, without reference to any scholastic system, it would most naturally present itself to the human intelligence. Many are the mistakes, which, attention to this rule, will help us to avoid. Thus it will make us careful to choose a text, which, as far as our subject requires us to make use of it, contains a complete sense in itself,—not picking out some fragmentary portion of a verse, without caring to see how far it may be qualified by the words which follow; still less detaching one member of a sentence from another, in order that the isolated limb may be presented in a more exaggerated and striking light. It will teach us to discriminate between those passages of Scripture, which contain a Divine sentiment, in an approved and sanctioned form; and those which, though found in the sacred narrative, are human statements only, and are introduced, as in the case of many arguments in the book of Job, only to be answered, afterwards, by the voice from the whirlwind, and the reproof of God. It will lead us to exercise a scrupulous and studied fairness in the use of our English version,—not taking advantage of any accident in the translation, affording more countenance, perhaps, to the particular view we are taking, than, we know, could be furnished by a more exact rendering of the original. In texts, of which the meaning has been much controverted, we shall not assume, with all confidence, the



construction which best suits us, arguing upon it, as if no other interpretation of the words had ever been thought of; neither, in the consideration of passages, where a double sense is manifestly intended,—as in many of the parables,—shall we press into the service of our illustration, parts of the inspired statement, which, though applicable enough to the age in which they were written, can only, in very limited degree, be transferred to the circumstances of our own times. True, there may not be many in our congregations, who will take note of these things; but, to us, it should be motive enough to avoid them, that, with the few who *do* find us out in such lapses, much of our moral influence, as teachers, is gone.

3. Our last cautionary remark, upon this subject, has respect to the choice of *strange* texts, startling texts, texts, which must be subjected to the fires of a strong spiritual alembic, before any moral application of them can be made at all. We would not be understood as discountenancing altogether, the selection of striking and unusual texts, nor even the placing of them, in some new and original light. With an assembly before us, prone to errantry of thought, and “in their hearts,” perhaps, “going after their covetousness,” the limits should not be too straitened, within which, we may quicken attention, or gain, for our subject, a sympathetic ear. Substantially, we have but the same message to deliver from Sunday to Sunday; and, therefore, the



guile is a very harmless one, which, by the aid of novel lights and combinations, can give to these old things the appearance of that which is new. The modesty we are in danger of overstepping, in such attempts, lies in the direction of good taste, chastened reverence, sober and judicious spiritualizing. And, for transgressions of this kind, there is a certain nemesis, for which no stimulated or sustained attention, on the part of a few of our hearers, will ever compensate us. The wiser and better of those who listen to us are angry, soured, put out of humour, to find that the end of all our straining to interest, and theirs to follow us, in some novel illustration, has been a mere *catch*; an unworthy play upon words; a far-fetched conceit, of which the prettiness is more striking than the point, and the Scriptural propriety more questionable than either.

In the writings of Origen, and other Fathers, as well as in sermons of the reformed and puritanical age, instances of these puerile affectations occur constantly. And such things as the “two-pence” which the good Samaritan left with the host, until his return, being intended to set forth the two sacraments of the Christian Church until the coming of the Lord;<sup>12</sup> or the distance at which Christ stood from the shore, when addressing the people from a boat, being an intended type of the distance between the Divine and human nature;<sup>13</sup> or “the nine-and-twenty knives,” which Ezra tells us, were re-

<sup>12</sup> Luke x. 35.

<sup>13</sup> Luke v. 3.

restored by Cyrus to the Jews, being taken to represent nine-and twenty kinds of providential judgments;<sup>14</sup> or the old cast clout and rotten rags ”<sup>15</sup> which Jeremiah put under his arm-holes, being made to stand for the stained righteousness of the sinner, while, by the words of Ebed-melech, it was foreshewn that Christ’s righteousness was the only effectual instrument of deliverance,—may fairly be cited as examples of what the somnolent tendencies of people, in those times, required, as well as of what their undisciplined taste could bear.

On the other hand, there are some accommodations of inspired words, which we feel to be quite allowable. Of these, we have examples, in such sermons as that of Dr. Arnold, who, from the text, “The Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever,”<sup>16</sup> founds a discourse on the separation of friends, parting never to meet again; or, in that of Dwight, who, from the words “in the garden was a new sepulchre,” takes occasion to shew what an intermingling there is, of the sad and the joyous, in human history; or, in the discourse of Blair to the aged, founded on the words, “And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou;”<sup>17</sup> or in Robert Hall’s view of the

<sup>14</sup> Ezra i. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Jer. xxxviii. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Exod. xiv. 15. This and some other examples under this head are taken from Mr. Gresley’s *Ecclesiastes Anglicanus*. Lett. xx. and xxv.

<sup>17</sup> Exod. xlvii. 8.

spiritual conflicts of believers, as based upon the wars of Joshua with the Canaanitish nations.<sup>18</sup> All these instances may shew the possibility of spiritualizing upon Scripture incidents, with pure and unoffending taste,—at once awakening a lively interest in our hearers, and shewing them how, in their own private reading, to exercise the powers of a moral thoughtfulness, in regard to every part of the word of God.

We have alluded to the danger of transgressing the laws of taste, in the adaptations of a striking text. The rules of exegetical honesty must be respected also. In a controversial point of view, we know these marked passages would never be cited in the way of *proof*. We have selected them only as a basis for interesting *illustration*. And the acknowledgment should be made that we have done so; that the discourses which we found on such texts, are merely the adaptations thereto of our own thoughts, and not the development of some hidden meaning, which we profess to have discovered in the text itself. To argue, as if, when the wise man said, “There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother,”<sup>19</sup> it was in the mind of the Spirit to foreshew the tenderness of our Lord’s human sympathies; or as if, when it is said, “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward,”<sup>20</sup> there were a recondite allusion to the necessity of a growth in grace and sanctification,—is not

<sup>18</sup> Josh. v. 13—15. See works vol. v. p. 196.

<sup>19</sup> Prov. xviii. 24.

<sup>20</sup> Exod. xiv.

overstepping the line of a permitted accommodation merely, it is simply not honest. Beautiful analogies may strike us, and coincidences so subtle, that we can hardly help regarding them as the effect of concealed design. But a text is a thing to be expounded. And, whatever we may choose to *infer*—in the way of direct explication, it must be made responsible for what its words will bear, and for nothing more.

II. The next thing in the structure of a sermon, on which a few remarks may be permitted, is the *exordium*. The importance of this, in an ordinary rhetorical exercise, we readily acknowledge. It is that, by which the orator bespeaks for himself attention, confidence, sympathy, raised hope: and it will require a good many after excellencies, in a discourse, to efface the impression of a halting and ill-considered beginning. By ancient rhetoricians, the rules laid down for managing the opening of an address, were, as we know, of the most precise and elaborate kind; and a better practical exponent of their principles could hardly be wished for than the Apostle Paul, whether in his answer to the orator Tertullus, or in his address to the people on the castle stairs.

In the choice of methods for exordium, the sermon may present fewer varieties, perhaps, than the forensic address, but the end to be attained is the same. Quintilian's definition will hold good in either case. "An

exordium," he says, "has no other end than to dispose the mind of the hearer to listen favourably to the sequel of the discourse ;—to render him benevolent, attentive, docile." Still, our means for doing this, in the case of the sermon, are limited. First, by the brevity to which we are compelled,—the stint measure we can afford for any exordium at all. In a discourse, which is not to be more than thirty or forty minutes long, people like not to see any considerable part of the time taken up in mere approaches to the subject.<sup>21</sup> They prefer to get into the heart of the discussion as soon as they can,—to see the work which lies before them, and something of the line of thought which is suggested for their following.

A further limit is imposed by the necessity, very rarely to be dispensed with, of explaining the terms and connection of the passage, from which we are proposing to discourse. Criticism of this kind is sometimes capable of being interwoven with the general texture of the sermon. But, as a rule, it requires to be disposed of first. And, in this case, the addition of exegesis, to any general or reflective exordium, may give to the discourse a sluggish and encumbered movement at starting. The

<sup>21</sup> Howe is very faulty in this particular ; and his biographer tells us of a good woman who shewed her displeasure at his preliminary skirmishing, by saying, that "he was so long in laying the cloth, that she always despaired of the dinner." *Life and Character of Howe*, by Henry Rogers, p. 474.

subject once opened, people become impatient of anything which stops the way.

Hence, on looking at the compositions of our best sermon writers, it will be found that, in the great majority of instances, the exordium is something born directly of the text itself, as distinguished from any train of moral reflections, bearing, more or less directly, on the intended subject of discourse. And the plan possesses greater scope for variety than, at first sight, appears. It is not necessary, in order to it, that every sermon should open with the same stereotyped formula, commencing with "The words of our text." On the contrary, the mere accessories of the passage to be considered, will always afford scope for varied openings. And, in the author of the book, or the occasion of the words, or the scene of the transaction, in the circumstances of those for whom the composition was written, or the moral features of the times in which the writer lived,—forms of illustration will suggest themselves, which, by dealing with the personal, and the local, and the concrete, will be sure to arrest the attention of the hearers; and, after a few natural and easy sentences, will launch us fairly on the discussion of the subject. How easily does Blair introduce his sermon "On the causes of men's being weary of life," by a few graphic touches, borrowed from the personal history of his author. "Job, in the first part of his days, was the greatest of all the men of the East. His pos-



sessions were large; his family were numerous and flourishing, his own character was fair and blameless.”<sup>22</sup>

Still, in preaching constantly to the same congregation, the more varied our forms of address are the better. And hearers, of a thoughtful habit of mind, especially, find the indirect or suggestive exordium very helpful in awakening interest. They like to be making their conjectures how we shall get at our subject, through that door,—to see, or to think they see, the foreshadowing of our coming line of thought,—watching the gradual widening of the vista which discloses the goal they are to arrive at, as well as observing, with pleased surprise, its unsuspected connection with the text. An exordium of this kind requires care, and, to slow and uninventive minds, is not easy. The danger to be guarded against is twofold,—that of the thoughts introduced being too *distantly* related to the subject which is to follow, and that of their being too *nearly* akin to it. If the thoughts are too remotely related, the endeavour to get back to the text becomes embarrassed, and constrained, and unnatural. If they are too closely allied, it is hardly possible to avoid infringing upon the general subject,—forestalling, by an incidental notice, some points, which are to be considered afterwards; and thus causing it to appear that we are going twice over the same ground. Hence an aphorism, or secular quotation, is often very useful as the basis of

<sup>22</sup> Sermons, vol. iv. 1.



this kind of exordium. If we can light upon one sufficiently germane to the subject in hand to admit of our gliding into the discussion easily, it is not likely to be so identical with it as to oblige us to anticipate ourselves. An example from Barrow, will illustrate our meaning. His text is, "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely."<sup>23</sup> And he begins:—

"The world is much addicted to the politics; the heads of men are very busy in contrivance, and their mouths are full of talk about the ways of consulting our safety and securing our interests. May we not, therefore, presume that an infallible maxim of policy, proposing the most expedite and certain method of security in all our transactions, will be entertained with acceptance. Such an one the greatest politician and wisest man for business (if we may take God's word for it) that ever was or will be, doth here suggest to us, 'He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely.'"<sup>24</sup>

Other forms of exordium may be noticed, very effective in skilled hands, but demanding for their use a sound and discriminating judgment. Of such is the relation of an anecdote, or allegory, or the startling exclamation, or the introduction of some imaginary objection to the language of the text itself. Of the anecdote, it seems only necessary to remark, that it should be apposite, brief, pointed. People will generally follow us, through a well-told incident, and even become interested in it; but the reaction is quick, and the posture of mind, towards the rest of our sermon, un-

<sup>23</sup> Prov. x. 9.

<sup>24</sup> Barrow's Works, vol. i., serm 5.

kindly, if they find it was for its *own* sake that we told the story, and not for its relevancy to the point in hand. As an example of the effective use of such a weapon, we may quote the commencement of a sermon by Dr. Arnold. His text is, "The children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light." And he begins:—"It is a remarkable story, told by the poet Cowper, of himself, that when he was a young man, and living in London, where his companions were not only persons of profligate life, but of low and ungodly principles, they always had a great advantage over him, when arguing upon the truth of Christianity, by reproaching him with the badness of his own life. In fact, it appears that his life, at that time, was quite as bad as theirs; and they used to upbraid him for it, telling him that it would be well for him if they were right, and he wrong, in their opinions respecting the truth of the Gospel: for, if it were true, he certainly would be condemned upon his own showing."<sup>25</sup> Of the allegory the following example may be taken from Ogden. His subject is the "certain benefit of prayer," from the text, "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Matt. vii. 7). And he begins:—

"You may remember a little ancient fable to the following purpose. An old man, upon his death-bed, said to his sons, as they stood around him, 'I am possessed, my dear children, of a treasure of great value, which, as it is fit, must now be yours.' They drew

<sup>25</sup> School Sermons, Serm. xxviii., p 276.

nearer. ‘Nay,’ added the sick man, ‘I have it not here in my hands; it is deposited somewhere in my fields: *dig, and you will be sure to find.*’ They followed his directions, though they mistook his meaning. Treasures of gold and silver there were none: but by means of this extraordinary culture, the land yielded, in the time of harvest, such an abundant crop, as both rewarded them for their obedience to their parent, and, at the same time, explained the nature of his command.”<sup>26</sup>

Still more is great caution required, if we are meditating the exclamatory, or startling form of exordium. When a preacher, after announcing as his text, “Take no thought what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your bodies what ye shall put on”—exclaims, with Bishop Horne, “What! take no thought! no thought at all for the morrow! Attend only to the day which is passing over us, and make no provision for the future!”—or, when after giving out those words of St. John,—“and His commandments are not grievous!” he breaks out, with Sterne, into the impassioned exclamation, “No, they are not grievous, my dear auditors!”<sup>27</sup> there is a natural and outspoken frankness, in the mode of address, which makes us warm towards the speaker at once. But when we find a man takes for his text, “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting,” and then follows up the inspired words by saying, “That I deny—but let us hear the wise man’s reasoning upon

<sup>26</sup> Sermons, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Vol. v. Serm. xxii.

it;"<sup>28</sup>—or when, after the example of South, if we remember rightly, a preacher begins a sermon, "There is no God :—from all eternity things have been as they are :"—and after keeping his hearers in a state of breathless astonishment, by a string of atheistical platitudes,—abruptly changing the tone of his voice, to say,—"Thus saith the fool in his heart,"—we cannot help feeling that we are being trifled with. Arts to the artist, and tricks to the buffoon. But

"We seek Divine simplicity in him  
Who handles things Divine."

III. We advance another step, by offering some remarks on the *general discussion* of the subject.

Here, the first caution which suggests itself, is that, of seeing to it that we have some definite subject to discuss,—that we have a clear view of what we are aiming at, and intend that others should have a clear view of it too. The caution, it is to be feared, is far from needless. There are many, who, in writing a sermon, can hardly say that they set out with the intention to prove one thing more than another. And their discourse is just what might be expected ; a succession of truisms, but unrelated to any general thesis,—a congeries of links, but no chain.

Hence, foremost among the structural qualities of a good sermon, we should put a careful regard *to unity of*

<sup>28</sup> Vol. i., Sermon. 2.

*subject*,—the hearer's attention fixed steadily on some central truth, to which every illustration and every argument should bring its own contingent of strength and light. Many, in order to this, have recommended that we give to our sermons, at the outset, a *descriptive title*,—not, of necessity, to be announced in any verbal form, but as a mark for ourselves, that we may know what we are going to preach about. The rule will be helpful to us in many ways. It will assist us in the collection and arrangement of our materials: teaching us what to retain, and what to reject,—what points may be disposed of by a subsidiary or incidental mention, and where it may be better to amplify and expand. Moreover, it is only by the perceived convergence of all we are saying towards one focus, that we can save ourselves from being misunderstood. For intelligent hearers *will* have unity in a discourse; and if a preacher, in other respects worth listening to, be obscure as to what his own main point is, they will make a unity for him,—will single out the first prominent thought that strikes them, and make a subject out of that,—fancying they have an exact comprehension of his whereabouts, and then reducing his aimless and unarranged materials, into harmony with their own conjecture.

In sermons, therefore, as in every other work of human skill, we demand *unity*. The injunction, “*sit simplex duntaxat et unum*,” is a good rule, not for one

art only, but for all. An epic without its hero, a piece of music without its key, a picture made up entirely of chief figures, would, in spite of any excellences of detail, be condemned as a hopeless failure. Paley, in one of his charges, says, "Propose one point in one discourse, and stick to it; a hearer never carries away more than one impression." One *uppermost* impression, perhaps, and the Archdeacon's dictum may stand: because, though others are carried away, they are only as ancillary to *that*, confirmatory of *that*, illustrative of *that*. And this centripetal check upon all we introduce into a sermon, is what we should always aim at. We are to bring the dispersed parts together, so that they may make one whole;—may make their impression upon the mind as a whole. The logical steps, we have gone through, may not have been followed; and, only as a succession of undistinguishable, prismatic forms, may have been remembered our most striking thoughts. But still, if, as "a nail in a sure place," there have been fastened, upon the mind, one thoroughly mastered truth, one deeply-ingrafted lesson, one central and outstanding fact of the Divine government and goodness, our end is answered. We "have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

From unity in a discourse we pass, on to the cognate subject of *arrangement*. A preacher may guard against any misconception of the immediate purpose of his sermon, by a formal announcement at the beginning;

but he will never succeed in fixing the attention of his hearers, without regard to an orderly distribution of his materials,—the right thoughts coming in at the right place. Where no attention is paid to this point, the mind of the hearer has nothing to rest upon. He recalls, perhaps, a tolerable argument in one part of the sermon, and a fair illustration in another,—here a carefully constructed statement of doctrine, and there a good practical appeal,—but how they came in, where they came in, why they came in,—how they were severally related to each other, or what was their bearing on some larger and more general plan,—this he cannot tell, and the wonder would be if he could; for the preacher hardly knew himself.<sup>29</sup>

It seems almost needless to say that such discourses can tend very little to edification. They offend taste. They weary the powers of attention. They violate all

<sup>29</sup> “We too often meet with sermons,” says Archdeacon Sinclair, in a late Charge, “of which the most attentive hearer can give no intelligible account. Considered as compositions, they have neither beginning, middle, nor end.” And he illustrates his remark by the following anecdote: “I well remember an estimable prelate, long deceased, whose boast it was that nothing could interrupt him in the composition of a sermon. ‘He could,’ he said, ‘resume, at any time, his task, as if it never had been broken off.’ The truth was, that, in composing his discourses, he made almost every paragraph complete in itself, and often independent of those that followed or preceded it” Charge to the Clergy of Middlesex, 1855.



the canons of good writing. They neither instruct, nor persuade, nor please. Quintilian compares orations of this kind, to an army of soldiers in disorder. They advance; they fall back; they cross each other's lines; they redouble strength where no defence is required, and leave their weakest flank unsheltered from the assaults of the foe. And the comparison is not inapposite to some sermons. There is, in them, a vast array of proofs and illustrations, but all crowding, and jostling, and getting into each other's way. Real objections are suffered to pass without notice, whilst unassailable positions are covered with defences. An argument, which the hearer supposed he had done with, is taken up again,—reappearing in a connection, in which it is not wanted, and taking up the room of something else that is. Thus the discourse ends with nothing proved, and nothing taught. There may have been cleverness in it, and, what is better, there may have been goodness; but, through this utter disregard of any principles of grouping or arrangement, it remains upon the hearer's mind as a mere chaos of ideas,—a thing of feebleness, and anarchy, and “most admired disorder.”

Rules, for guarding against this disorderly sermonizing, we should find it difficult to lay down. We shall, perhaps, be more helpful to our younger brethren, if we give some examples of the different methods of discussing a subject, as found in the sermons of the

best preachers, whether of our own Church, or of other communions ;—shewing how they kept their eye fixed upon the σκοπὸς of their subject, with all the undeviating intentness of the ancient racer,<sup>30</sup> whilst every part of their well laid-out plan was seen to be assisting and hastening unto the end.<sup>31</sup>

1. Thus, take as an example of the *method by direct illustration*, or expansion of the leading thought of the text, the following from Barrow. His text is, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. v. 17). And he says :—

“For understanding these words, let us first consider what is meant by the act enjoined, *praying* : then what the qualification or circumstance adjoined, *without ceasing*, doth import. After a slight notice of the act enjoined, he passes to what he designs to be the real subject, the import of *praying incessantly*. I. First, then, it may import the maintaining in our souls a ready disposition or habitual inclination to devotion. II. It may denote a vigilant attendance (with earnest regard and firm purpose), employed upon devotion. III. It may signify that we do actually embrace all fit seasons and emergent occasions of devotion. IV. It may signify that we should, with assiduous urgency, drive on the intent of our prayers, never quitting it, or deserting, till our requests are granted. V. It may import that we do, with all our occupations, and all occurrences, interlace devout ejaculations of prayer and praise.”<sup>32</sup>

2. Take an example, from Sherlock, of the *method by*

<sup>30</sup> Phil. iv. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Semper ad eventum festinat. Hor. Art. Poet.

<sup>32</sup> Works, i, Serm. 6.

*implication*, or the consideration of truths assumed to be implicitly contained in a text. His text is, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. iii. 12). And he announces three principles as found in the words, all bearing upon his one subject, "the character of an unbelieving heart." They are:—

*First*, that it is for want of faith, considered as a principle of religion, that men depart from the living God. *Secondly*, that faith cannot be a principle of religion, until it has its effects and operations in the heart. *Thirdly*, that the motions and operations of the heart, are, in great measure, under our own power and government." <sup>33</sup>

3. Of the *method by observation*, or suggested thoughts, growing directly out of the subject in hand, we may take an example from Blair, in his sermon "On the power of conscience," founded on the history of Joseph's brethren. After opening his text, "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother," &c. (Gen. xlii. 21, 22), he proceeds:—

"From this instructive passage of history the following observations naturally arise. I. That a sense of right and wrong in conduct, or of moral good and evil, belongs to human nature. II. That it produces an apprehension of merited punishment when we have committed evil. III. That, although this inward sentiment be stifled, during the season of prosperity, yet in adversity it will revive. And, IV. That, when it revives, it determines us to con-

<sup>33</sup> Sherlock's Works, vol. i. Disc. xiv., p. 382.

sider every distress which we suffer, from what cause soever it has arisen, as an actual infliction of punishment by heaven. The consideration of these particulars will lead us to a very serious view of the nature of man, and of the government of God.”<sup>34</sup>

4. Of the *method by confirmation*, or the justifying of the statement, contained in the text, by apposite reasons, we have an example in South.

His text is, “The prosperity of fools shall destroy them” (Prov. i. 32). And he proceeds to enlarge upon the three following reasons for the statement. I. Because every foolish or vicious person is either ignorant or regardless of the proper ends and use for which God designs the prosperity of those to whom He sends it. II. Because prosperity, (as the nature of man now stands) has a peculiar force and fitness to abate men’s virtues, and to heighten their corruptions. And III. Because it directly indisposes them to the proper means of amendment and recovery.<sup>35</sup>

5. An example of the *argumentative method*, as in cases where, on a superficial reading, there may be something in the sacred text open to objection, we have in Paley’s sermon on “Visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children,” from the text, Exod. xx. 5, and by way of meeting current objections, he says:—

My exposition of the passage is contained in these four articles :—First, that the denunciation and sentence relate to the sin of idolatry in particular, if not to that alone. Secondly, that it relates to temporal, or more properly speaking, to family prosperity and adversity. Thirdly, that it relates to the Jewish economy, in

<sup>34</sup> 2 Sermons i. p. 329.

<sup>35</sup> Sermons, vol. i., Sermon 38.

that particular administration of a visible Providence under which they lived. Fourthly, that at no rate does it affect, or was ever meant to affect, the acceptance or salvation of individuals in a future life.<sup>36</sup>

6. Of the bolder dialectic method, where the difficulty is wrested from the objector's hands, and, as it were, turned against himself,—we have an example in Bishop Horsley. His text is, “For the poor shall never cease out of the land,” &c., Deut. xv. 11—and after noticing some “shocking conclusions” which had been drawn from the inequalities of social life, he opens his subject thus:—

I therefore undertake to prove, these two things. *First*, that poverty is a real evil, which, without any impeachment of the goodness or wisdom of Providence, the constitution of the world actually admits. *Secondly*, that the providential appointment of this evil, in subservience to the general good, brings a particular obligation upon men in civilized society to concur for the immediate extinction of the evil wherever it appears. “The poor shall never cease out of the land, and, ‘therefore,’ for this especial reason, it is commanded that thou open thine hand wide unto thy brother.”<sup>37</sup>

7. Of the *method by investigation*, or proposed inquiry into the meaning of a Scripture passage, by considering it under certain hypothetical conditions, we have an example in Jeremy Taylor. His subject is “The return

<sup>36</sup> Works vol vi., Sermon 13, page 208.

<sup>37</sup> Sermon at Festival of Sons of the Clergy, 1786. Sermons, p. 432, ed. 1896

of prayer; or, the conditions of a prevailing prayer," and his text, John ix. 31, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners," &c. And after some preliminary observations, he says:—

And, therefore, 1, we shall consider what are those conditions, which are required in every person that prays, the want of which makes the prayer to be a sin? 2. What are the conditions of a good man's prayers, the absence of which makes that even his prayers return empty? 3. What degrees and circumstances of piety are required to make a man fit to be an intercessor for others, both with holiness in himself, and effect to them he prays for. And, 4, as an appendix to these considerations, I shall add the proper indices and significations, by which we make a judgment whether God hath heard our prayers or no.<sup>38</sup>

8. The mode by *perpetual application to the conscience* is very effective, and the following is the outline of a sermon by Robert Hall, noticed in an article in the *Quarterly Review* as a sermon of singular excellence. The subject is "Marks of love to God," from the text, "But I know you that ye have not the love of God in you" (John v. 42). And in presenting his subject he begins:—

I. I shall entreat your attention while I suggest a variety of marks which indicate love to God; and II. Supposing the conviction produced by the statement to be, that you have not the love of God, I shall point out the proper improvement of such a conviction. Then, under the first head, follow the marks. They are, 1. The general bent and tenor of your thoughts, when not under

<sup>38</sup> Practical Works, part. ii. Sermon 4.

the immediate control of circumstances. 2. How you stand disposed towards the exercises of religion. 3. How you stand affected towards the word of God. 4. With what sentiments you regard the people of God. 5. What disposition you entertain toward the person and office of the Son of God. 6. How you are affected by Divine benefits. 7. How you are impressed by the sense of your sins. 8. How you are affected to the present world. II. The feelings with which a discovery of our failure in these marks should be accompanied are (1) deep humiliation, (2) alarm of conscience, and (3) thankfulness that our case is not hopeless.<sup>39</sup>

9. The method of discussing a text by means of *antithesis*, or *contrast*, or other striking form of presenting a subject,—when the construction is not too artificial,—is often very helpful in fixing attention. The following is from Archbishop Fléchier, on Saul's conversion :—

Consider, first, what Jesus Christ did for St. Paul. Secondly, what St. Paul did for Jesus Christ. In the first part, he opens Divine compassion as a spring, whence flowed Paul's creation, preservation, conversion, gifts, graces, usefulness, &c. The second part relates to the use that St. Paul made of all these, out of gratitude, and to God's glory.<sup>40</sup>

Or take an example from the late Mr. Jay, of Bath, from the text, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," (Matt. vi. 33).

The words lead us to ask and enable us to answer three questions. I. WHAT are we to seek? "The kingdom of God and His righteousness." II. How are we to seek? We are to seek them

<sup>39</sup> Works by Gregory, vi., p. 341.

<sup>40</sup> Sermon 8, tom 1.



"First,"—first in time, and first in attention. III. WHY are we to seek? Because in seeking these we are sure to succeed; and in addition to these "all other things shall be given us."<sup>41</sup>

Richard Watson, a preacher justly esteemed among the Wesleyans, and a man of highly cultivated mind, has also a very striking sermon on the "Expulsion from Paradise," Gen. iii. 24, "So he drove out the man," &c.

Our attention is directed by the text to two particulars, and there is another, which it is our blessedness to connect with them not immediately suggested by the text, but by other parts of Scripture. I will call your attention to I. Paradise SHUT; II. Paradise GUARDED; III. Paradise RE-OPENED. The loss to man by his expulsion from Paradise; his continued exclusion by the guarding barrier of the Divine perfections; and the final removal of this barrier by the person and work of Christ,—are all topics made to arise out of the subject, and are treated with considerable skill.<sup>42</sup>

10. The method *partly discussional*, and *partly hortatory*, is one adopted, by some, with much success. The following is an example of one of the Salter's Hall Lectures;—an old Presbyterian foundation in the city, and one usually held by some eminent preacher. The sketch here given, though far too overladen with topic, for the limits of a Church of England discourse, discovers a thorough grasp of the subject in hand. The text is, "Unto whom much is given, of him will much be required" (Luke xii. 48).

<sup>41</sup> Short Sermons, vol. iii. p. 65.

<sup>42</sup> Sermons, vol. ii. p. 351.

I shall, in the first place, take a general view of the talents bestowed on man. Secondly, attempt a vindication of Providence with respect to the diversity of gifts. Thirdly, endeavour to shew the responsibility attached to all such privileges and talents. I. His general view of the talents bestowed on man, he subdivides into five classes. 1. Natural, such as genius, memory, imagination. 2. Acquired, from education, intercourse, opportunity. 3. External, such as patrimony, fortune, influence. 4. Political or civil. 5. Religious. II. His vindication of Providence with respect to the diversity of gifts, is made to rest. 1. On the right which God has over the faculties of His creatures. 2. On the drawbacks and temptations incidental to the possession of great talents. 3. On the opportunity afforded by these diverse bestowments for the exercise of the various Christian virtues. III. The responsibility, attaching to the possession of great privileges or talents, is argued. 1. From the general expectation of mankind. 2. From the claims of equity, justice, and gratitude. 3. From the testimony of Scripture. Then follows a close practical application.<sup>43</sup>

Such are a few, out of an almost endless variety of methods by which a text of Scripture may be presented for discussion, so as to secure both unity in the subject, and order in the arrangement of the thoughts. We have purposely abstained from limiting our selections to preachers of our own communion, because of the ever-pressing need, felt by most of us, of something diverse, and fresh, and new, in our modes of bringing truth before the mind. Moreover, both by preachers on the continent, and by those who differ from us at home, preaching is more distinctly recognised as an art, than it

<sup>43</sup> Sermons delivered at Salter's Hall, by Hugh Worthington, Holdsworth, 1823.

is among us ; and on no feature of the art do they insist more strenuously, than on the necessity of great care and clearness in the construction of the discourse. We think it was Bourdaloue, who said, " I can forgive a bad sermon, sooner than I can forgive a bad outline."

And this brings us to another question. Admitting, as all will, the necessity of a well-considered plan, is it indispensable to the hearer's comprehension of such plan, that the *divisions*, according to which it is proposed to treat the subject, should all be laid out and *announced* beforehand? On no point, connected with our subject, perhaps, are opinions more at issue than upon this. Fénelon argues strongly against these announced divisions. They cramp the discourse. They break the continuity of the subject. They present us with three or four little sermons. They suspend the free march of the subject, and, at every moment, command unseasonable halts. " A sermon hampered by these restrictions," he says, " is not a beautiful well-veined marble, but a stiffly formed mosaic."<sup>44</sup> Pro-

<sup>44</sup> Vinet's Homiletics, p. 263. Fénelon adds further, that the practice is wholly without countenance from the great orators of antiquity. But in this, he is clearly wrong. Both authority and example to the contrary are given in Simeon's edition of Claude. The example is from Cicero " pro lege Maniliâ." " Causa quæ sit videtis; nunc quid agendum sit, considerate. *Primum* mihi videtur de genere belli; *deinde* de magnitudine; *tum*, de imperatore deligendo esse dicendum." And the subdivisions are announced with equal distinctness, under each head. Essay, ch. iv.

fessor Blunt, also, we suppose, will be quoted on the same side, though his objection rests on a very different ground. Allowing the use of heads, he says, it may be sometimes questionable, whether it is expedient to announce in full, your plan at the outset, as it may occasionally have, on the hearer, the effect which the prospect of a long road has upon the traveller.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand Bishops Wilkins and Tillotson, and most of the modern continental writers on preaching, argue strongly for a clear and distinct announcement. Both the end and the way thereto, are to be seen from the first. "The practice is eligible," says Bishop Wilkins, "for the benefit of the hearers; who may understand and retain a sermon, with greater ease and profit, when they are beforehand acquainted with the general heads of discourse."<sup>46</sup> Of continental authorities, one writes; "Divisions are important, because they determine the point of view from which the orator proposes to consider the proposition; whilst the hearer, being in possession of a view of the whole subject, more easily follows the development of the ideas, and more easily finds again the thread of the discourse, when a moment of distraction has made him lose it."<sup>47</sup>

Before offering any opinion of our own, on this con-

<sup>45</sup> See duties of a Parish Priest, p. 169.

<sup>46</sup> Gift of Preaching, § iv. p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Ammon, quoted by Vinet. Homiletics, p. 184. See other testimonies in the same chapter.

troverted topic, it may be well, as in the question relating to the different modes of discussing a text, that we offer a few examples of the methods, by which different preachers are found to announce a subject for consideration. Passing over that fanciful form of dividing a sermon which found favour in Puritan times, and which consisted in a sort of homiletical punning,—parcelling out the discourse into the *ἔτι*, the *ἐνὶ*, and the *καθὼς*; or the *egress*, the *regress*, and the *progress*; or the *Deus dixit*, and the *Deus bene dixit*,—passing over, also, that other peculiarity of the same, and even a later period,—requiring that every discourse should be broken up into the most cumbrous and complicated scheme of divisions, consisting of chief heads, and lesser heads, and uses and inferences without number,<sup>48</sup>—we may probably bring most of the varieties of introducing a subject, under one of the three following classifications, namely, 1. The elaborate, and partially developed announcement. 2. The less artificial, but still divisional announcement. And 3. The flowing, or slightly indicated announcement.

<sup>48</sup> Mr. Lye, a minister of the 17th century, in a sermon on 1 Cor. vi. 17, first explains the text in *thirteen* divisions for fixing it on the right basis; and then subjoins *fifty-six* additional topics. Another writer of the same period, Mr. Drake, published a sermon of *one hundred and seventy-six divisions*, to which are appended sundry queries and solutions;—the preacher telling us, at the end, that many important particulars are passed over, because he wished to limit himself to the marrow and substance.

1. By the elaborate and highly artificial announcement, we mean one in which not only every division and sub-division must be advertised beforehand, but in which a largely-expanded syllabus of the intended course of thought is made to precede the actual discussion. We may give an example from Bishop Andrewes. His text is, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness," &c. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

Speaking of it then, as a mystery, the Apostle doth here propound two things. 1. First, that it is one without controversy, &c. 2. Then what it is, "God manifested in the flesh." 3. And out of these will grow a third necessarily, how to order the matter that we may have our fellowship in this mystery. In the first part *four* things be affirmed. 1. That it is a "mystery." 2. A mystery "of Godliness." 3. A "great" one. 4. A great one "without controversy." Then doth he as it were rend the veil in sunder, and shew us what it is. 1. God "manifested." 2. God manifested "in the flesh." Which mystery, how it may concern us, will be our third and last consideration, and that two ways. 1. By the operation of it in us. 2. By the initiation of us into it.<sup>49</sup>

The further expansions of the subject, in Andrewes, before discussion, sometimes extend over half a folio page. Examples of a similar kind will be found in Baxter.

2. Of the less artificial, but still *divisional form* of announcement we have given examples already, when speaking of varieties in the method of discussion. Under one or other of its modifications, it is adopted almost universally, by the continental preachers, by the

<sup>49</sup> Sermons fol. ed. p. 17.



Nonconformists, and by a large proportion of preachers in our own communion, especially in the delivery of unwritten sermons. By Vinet, and Claude, and Simeon, it is assumed to be the normal type of homiletical composition,—all departures from it being tolerated only as an exceptional variety. By some of the French Divines there is added to the first announcement, and antecedently to the general discussion of the subject, a more extended outline. Examples will be found in Saurin and Bourdaloue;<sup>50</sup> and, by them, the plan is effectively carried out. The danger, in this method, is that the second stage of development should encroach on the province of the third, and give the appearance of repetition.

3. The last kind of announcement we have called *the flowing, or slightly indicated announcement*. It is rarely adopted by extemporaneous preachers, but is to be found in the sermons of those who always read from a manuscript; and, among them, it is used by men of the highest mark. The following is from Bishop Horsley. His text is, “And the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple,” &c. And he presents the subject thus:—

With this solemn promise of the Saviour, Malachi, the last inspired teacher of the Jewish Church, closes the word of prophecy, till a greater prophet should arise again to open it. It will be a useful meditation, and well adapted to the present season, to consider the characters under which the person is here described, and the

<sup>50</sup> See Saurin's Sermon, Ecc. viii. 11 12, and Bourdaloue's Sermon on the Pentecost.



particulars of the business, upon which he is said to come ; that we may see how exactly the one and the other correspond to the person and performances of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>51</sup>

Our next example is from Chalmers, in his sermon on “The expulsive power of a new affection,” from the text, 1 John ii. 15, “Love not the world,” &c., he begins:—

There are two ways in which a practical moralist may attempt to displace, from the human heart, its love of the world,—either by a demonstration of the world's vanity, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon simply to withdraw its regards from an object that is not worthy of it; or by setting forth another object, even God, as more worthy of its attachment, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon not to resign an old affection, which shall have nothing to succeed it; but to exchange an old affection for a new one. My purpose is to shew, that from the constitution of our nature, the former method is altogether incompetent and ineffectual, and that the latter method will alone suffice for the rescue and recovery of the heart from the wrong affection that domineers over it. After having accomplished this purpose, I shall attempt a few practical observations.<sup>52</sup>

We may take another example from the late Archer Butler, who rarely has any marked divisions. His subject is, “The eternal life of Christ in Heaven,” from the text, “Behold, I am alive for evermore” (Rev. i. 18); and, after an introduction, his subject is thus opened:—

<sup>51</sup> Sermons xxx. p. 384.

<sup>52</sup> Works, vii., p. 58.

At this holy season, we profess more especially to discipline our hearts and minds for the Saviour's coming. Is it not well then that we consider the purposes of His present glorious life in Heaven, no less than of His former lowly life on earth ; is it not well that " in the spirit on the Lord's Day," we should endeavour to rise to the grandeur of His actual authority in Heaven, in order that we may, however feebly, learn to estimate what is indeed that state of which He is, by that last triumphant advent, to make us everlasting partakers ?<sup>53</sup>

From these, and the other examples before cited, it will be seen that the divisional plan is susceptible of great variety in the methods of its announcement, to some of which, at all events, the objections of Fénélon and other writers would not apply. The best practical rule for a preacher would seem to be not to tie himself up to *any uniform method* at all. Many men have many minds, and many subjects require different modes of discussion. As a rule, we strongly incline to some form of announced division. It may be set forth, either in a continuous sentence, or by the more strongly marked numerical breaks, according as the nature of the subject may require, but it should always be with sufficient distinctness for the hearer to understand the general drift of the argument,—what is the lesson to be enforced, or what is the truth which is to be proved. In the case of the extemporaneous preacher, especially, a well staked out course of thought, with definite halting places, seems almost indispensable. Unpremeditated

<sup>53</sup> Sermons, 1st series, serm. x. p. 126.

forms of illustration are sure to suggest themselves, in the course of preaching, which it were a very bondage not to yield to. Yet he must not suffer them to carry him too far away. And the taking up of one of his announced heads both facilitates and indicates his coming back.

We shall only pursue this question about announced divisions further, by hinting at two extremes, which, in practice, we may find it well to avoid.

The first is, the danger of falling into a *pedantic mannerism*;—of thinking ourselves obliged to accommodate every subject we take in hand to the same rigid external framework;—so many chief heads first, and these duly waited upon by a symmetrical train of satellites. Such uniformity is neither desirable nor necessary. The practice of some preachers, of casting every text they preach from into a tripliform mould, like the three hypothetical courses of a celebrated statesman,—with only such permutations as they can operate upon the statement, the doctrine, the inference; the instruction, the encouragement, the warning; the fact to be illustrated, the lesson to be taught, the principle to be applied,—is found, after a time, to become very wearisome. It is a mistake to suppose that this plan has an advantage over all others, in effecting a lodgement in the hearer's memory. Sermons, so far as they are remembered at all, are remembered chiefly for their clear presentment of some one salient truth,—explained,

developed, traced out, and followed into all the relations and duties of every-day life. The rest has disappeared. And, therefore, if, at the opening of a discourse, we do but take care that there be no doubt as to the proposition we are wishing to establish; and, if we are sure that our few easy and flowing sentences have indicated plainly our intended course of thought, the line and rule formality of previously announced divisions may occasionally be dispensed with. Paley has a favourite method of reducing his subject to one categorical proposition, or practical lesson; and then, without further announcement of divisions at the outset, and without any subdivisions at all, he goes through a series of illustrations of his main position, only indicating each, as he comes to it, by the word "Again." Blair has many sermons divided in a similar way. And, for the full and clear comprehension of the subject, in the instances to which the method is applied, we feel, these writers could not have adopted a better plan. At all events, our aim is to produce permanent impression; and the method of laying out our discourse, most likely to effect that object, is the best for our purpose. In dispensing to our people the "sincere milk of the word," we should have no preference for this mode or that,—we only desire "that they may grow thereby."<sup>54</sup>

But, in relation to modern practice, and as far as the written sermon is concerned, we incline to think our

<sup>54</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 2.

danger is from the other side;—the danger, we mean, lest, in our anxiety to keep clear of all formality and stiffness in our announcements of a subject, we should leave people in the dark as to what our subject is. This fault, we think, is fairly chargeable upon some of the great writers, who supplied us with examples of what we called the “flowing, or faintly indicated announcement.” Their indications are, often, too faint to be observed. And, in reading, we sometimes find ourselves half through the sermon, before the *quorsum tendit* of the discourse strikes us,—whither the preacher is going to take us, or to what propositions we are expected to assent. In the masterly sermon of Bishop Horsley, from the words, “From that time forth, began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things,” &c. (Matt. xvi. 21,) we are led through, page after page of attacks on certain exaggerated phases of the Calvinistic dogma; and are even brought face to face with the chief difficulties of the Priestley hypothesis of “necessity,” before we discover that it is not a sermon on the *whole text* we are going to have, as the day on which it was preached (Good Friday) would have led us to expect, but a sermon on the picked out phrase “*he MUST go*,” in relation to the philosophical difference between *certainty* and *necessity*, together with the freedom and responsibility of the moral agent.

On the general subject, both of *discussion* and *an-*

nouncement, we cannot conclude better than in the words of Paley. "Disdain not, he says, "the old fashion of dividing your sermons into heads; . . . a sermon which rejects these helps to perspicuity, will turn out a bewildered rhapsody, without aim or effect, order or conclusion." Whatever mode we decide upon, as best for presenting our subject to the hearer, or with whatever announcement of plan we may choose to accompany it,—patent, it should be, from the first, that we both have a *subject*, and have a *plan*. We may, or may not, in all cases, advertise, by distinct announcement, our coming processes of thought, but no one can fail to see that we are working upon a frame; have bound ourselves to keep upon certain tram lines; are not more anxious about the rigour of our proofs, and the propriety of our illustrations, than we are about the exhibition of each argument in its proper logical dependence, and the subservience of everything we advance to make some one position sure. For unarranged, inconsecutive, loosely put-together discourses, it is certain we can find no warrant in Scripture. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."<sup>55</sup>

IV. The last thing to be noticed, in the structure of a sermon, is the *conclusion*, or "peroration," as it is

<sup>55</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 15.



called. An important element is this, in a discourse. For if, to enlist the sympathies of an audience, it be necessary that we should *begin* well, so, in order to leave a permanent impression upon the conscience, it is indispensable that we should end well.”<sup>56</sup> Yet rules, for this purpose, are very difficult to lay down. It must suffice, to offer cautions against the two obvious and most frequent faults in the methods of conclusion,—the being too *short*, or too *long*; the startling and sharp abruptness, which makes people say, “We did not know he was going to leave off;”<sup>57</sup> or the wire-drawn, and rambling tediousness, which only makes them wish that he were.

Of these two faults, that which is most commonly complained of, is the *tediousness*. This, no doubt, is seen most frequently in the ill-prepared, extemporaneous preacher;—as we shall have occasion to point out in a subsequent chapter. But the written discourse may have its wearisome conclusion also,—especially with a preacher of desultory or unsystematic mind. The discussion of the subject, we will suppose, is closed. The goal is fairly reached. But fresh views have opened upon his mind, in the progress of his writing; and, as they are too good to be lost, he thinks he must press them into his concluding applications. These added thoughts, however, serve only to encumber. In their

<sup>56</sup> “Mortales semper postrema meminere.” Sallust.

<sup>57</sup> See Whateley. Elements of Rhetoric, Part I., ch. iv., § 13.



proper place, we could have welcomed them. But we have passed the frontier of discussion now ; and, being challenged to apply what we have learned, we expect hints for application, and nothing more. Still more tiresome is this protracted winding up of a discourse, when it is seen to be a mere match against time ; against so many sheets of paper, which have to be covered ; when, it is clear, that the preacher has nothing more to say, and therefore is obliged to have recourse to those feeble and discursive platitudes, which would not much help *any* sermon, but which, it is certain, would do for one sermon, quite as well as for another. Now, of course, we do not desiderate these platitudes any where ; but still, if we *must* have them, we would rather have their diluting influence in the main body of the discourse. A commenced application of the subject, is, to the hearers, a promise of speedily-approaching release. And, we are afraid, it must be admitted, that it is a promise, which the majority of hearers are not sorry to have kept. At all events, they get impatient of a slow and spiritless fire, at the end of a sermon. If the preacher has any power of vigorous and pungent appeal, they expect he will put it forth then. And, therefore, they sicken at those somnolent and slow-creeping perorations, only to be compared to the ending of a bad poem ; where

“ A needless Alexandrine ends the song,

That, like some wounded snake, drags its slow length along.”

The other fault of conclusions, to be noticed,—that of

*abruptness*, or taking the hearer by surprise,—is one for which our people will forgive us, sooner than we ought to forgive ourselves. With *us*, it should be the part of a sermon, from which we have the most hope. We are no longer teaching, but *persuading*. We are addressing ourselves more immediately to the affections and the will; pressing upon the awakened conscience, the solemn issues which hang upon our words; as words which God will make His own,—His own to condemn; His own to save; His own to acknowledge in that day, when those who received our message, shall be our crowns of rejoicing, and we shall stand rejoicing at their side.

It is verily a fault with us, therefore, if we suffer the opportunity of these closing applications to be lost. People are not only prepared for them, but, for the most part, are prepared to welcome them. Up to this time, their attention may have been but partially fixed. Owing to some “secret thing” with them, perhaps, their thoughts have got loose from their control. And the fretting domestic care, and the long-awaiting hope, and the overcharged, and all but bursting cloud, may have caused, even the good among them, to listen with a divided and distracted mind. The announced conclusion recalls them to a sense of where they are, and what they have been doing. And, if they are men of a tender heart, they will lift up a prayer that, though they had suffered the word of *doctrine* to fall to the

ground, they might gather something from the word of *exhortation*. Neither ought we to be without hope, that our last words may be blessed to the careless and the sinner. Knowing little of our doctrinal statements, and, perhaps, caring less,—they will often listen to a close, practical appeal, when they will attend to nothing else. Felix, the governor, betrayed neither interest nor emotion, all the time Paul was discoursing on the great hope of his nation, “the resurrection of the dead;” but when he came to the practical application of this doctrine, the benumbed conscience experienced a terrible awakening: “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.”

Upon the whole, therefore, we strongly incline to a *set* conclusion, and even to some intelligible intimation to our hearers, that we are about to enter upon it. In the mode of doing this, there need be nothing formal. A short pause, a slight change of voice, any one of our familiar verbal representatives for the “*Quæ cum ita sint*,” of the Roman orator, will suffice as a signal for increased attention,—serving as an intimation, to the devout, that the time for profit is short; and, to the careless, that, if they will listen now, they shall soon be set free. Whether there should be, in these conclusions, any formal recapitulation of the general argument,—the steps we had taken, and whither they had brought us; or whether we should content ourselves with a mere bird’s-eye and concentrated view of our occupied field

of thought,—is a point, which the nature of the subject, and our previous mode of treating it, will best enable us to determine. Our chief anxiety, in closing a discourse, will be, to see, that we “lose not those things which we have wrought.”<sup>58</sup> We should feel that we must gather up strength for one final effort. It is a time, not for declamation, not for prettinesses, not even for the subtle and well-reasoned argument; but rather for a style of short, sententious, axiomatic dogmatism. We have done with proof. We appeal to the convinced and enlightened conscience of our hearers. We throw out a fearless challenge to their faculties of reasoning, and their moral honesty. We bid them “lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet;” and then to abide by their own verdict,—“Yea, and why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?”<sup>59</sup>

And thus, our aim, in the close of a discourse, is to be rigorously, closely, intensely practical. We may rebuke, or we may encourage; our tone may be severe, or it may be tender; but, in either case, our one care is, that our last words should be *home* words. There should be, in them, applications of truth, from which the hearer feels that there is no escaping; which will meet him again on the morrow,—in his family, in his business, in the world,—a paramount law to his conscience, and the foundation of all his hopes of heaven. On this model, is cast the peroration of the great

<sup>58</sup> John ii. 8.

<sup>59</sup> Luke xii. 57.

Hebrew preacher. He was “wise;” he “taught the people knowledge;” yea, he gave good heed, and “sought out many proverbs.” But the end of his proverbs, and the consummation of his preaching, was the formation of an obedient character, and the desire to fill all hearts with the fear of God. “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter : fear God, and keep His commandments : for this is the whole duty of man.”<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Eccles. xii. 13.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ON STYLE, IN RELATION TO PREACHING.

Importance of style—Words not an accident of thoughts—Minds affected differently by different ways of saying the same thing—Style of Bishop Butler—I. The rule commonly given for preaching to be *plain*—How far this plainness is dependent on particular words—Preference for words of Saxon root—Whether plainness excludes argument—Danger of familiarity—Condescending to the poor—II. The theory of simplicity as applied to style—1. In relation to diffuseness—2. In its compatibility with the ornate and the figurative—3. In regard to careful revision and study of the rules of art—Pains-taking indispensable to all good composition.

IN specifying the requirements for effective oratory, Cicero sets down three things, in an ascending order of importance ;—the first, that we know what we have to say ; the second, that we have arranged the order in which we intend to say it ; the third, that we have considered how, that which we have to say, may be most suitably expressed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> De Orat. ch. xvi.

On the the propriety of assigning the most important place to this last requirement, it is likely that our practical English mind will be at issue with the Roman orator. We shall not readily assent to a principle, which seems to make the mere vehicle of thought of more importance than the thought itself; which would make substance wait on external show;—resolving the chief strength of an argument into the manner of saying it, and seeming to care less for the nourishing qualities of our intellectual food, than for the pleasure of having it brought forth on a “lordly dish.”

But does not the issue, thus raised, proceed upon the oversight of a fact,—assumed, no doubt, in the argument of Cicero, and growing out of the laws of our intellectual nature,—namely, that the *matter* of an idea, and the *manner* of expressing it, cannot be separated? that, together, they make up one mental creation, just as body and spirit make up one man? “It is in the highest degree unphilosophical,” said the poet Wordsworth, to some one who had spoken to him on this subject, “to call language, or diction, the *dress* of thought; it is the INCARNATION of thoughts.”<sup>2</sup> From the lips of none, perhaps, could such a sentiment have fallen with more propriety. His poetry throughout, is the poetry of suggestion. Often we have a full thought, a new field of thought, a key to many thoughts, and yet all is hidden under the subtle folds of a well-chosen word. A feeble epithet this word

<sup>2</sup> De Quincey’s “Selections, Grave and Gay,” p. 273.



had been, in unskilled hands,—laid on, lame, and languid. In the master's, it is not laid on, and cannot be taken out. It is an essence; a life; a delicate filament spun out of the vitals of his mental being; an interlacing tissue giving to the imagination, colour, and to the unshaped conception, form.

With the common off-hand objections, therefore, against a well-considered style, we have no sympathy. It is easy, and very plausible withal, to argue that if a man has any thing to say, he will have no difficulty in saying it; that a mind, full of its subject, will always have power of expression enough, and power of lucid arrangement enough to express plainly what it means;<sup>3</sup> in a word, as Milton has it, that “when such a man would speak, his words, like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about him at command, and, in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places.” But experience does not bear out this view. As a rule, it will be found, that to be a good thinker, a man must be a good writer. If he is to benefit others by his ideas, the faculties of expression and thought must be cultivated and used together; insomuch, that just as the thinker cannot separate the word from the conception, while carrying on his mental processes, so

3

“Cui lecta potenter erit res

Nec facundia deseret hunc, nec lucidus ordo.

And again,

Verbaque provisam rem non invita sequuntur.”

Hor. de Arte Poetica

neither can the hearer, in estimating the effect of what is delivered upon his own mind, determine how much is due to the thought, and how much to the language in which it is clothed.

Proofs of the latter part of our assertion occur constantly ;—at the bar, on the hustings, in the senate, wherever the appeal lies to the effects of a persuasive rhetoric. The whole power, for good or evil, seems to rest with *the style*. Take the case of two orators. Substantially, they adopt the same line of argument—appeal to the same facts, cite the same authorities, address themselves to the same feelings, in pointing out the consequences of this course of conduct or that. But their style is different. The one has an ear for the modulation of his periods ; the other lets his words tumble out as they will. The one knows the magic influence which often goes with a felicitous and forceful phrase ; the other never rises above the commonplace of the club-room,—things which had been heard a hundred times before. The one, in reciting his facts, like the pleader in a court of law, summons to his aid all the accessories of skilled and life-like delineation ; the other is like the attorney in the *lisuit*, who limits himself to the sharp hard details of his brief,—the undraped bareness of legal proof. And what is the difference of produced effect in the two cases ? Why, the one has carried all convictions, and all hearts along with him ; and, for “enterprizes of

great pith and moment," they are ready and ripe at once. The address of the other has fallen on the ears of his auditory with an insipid flatness. An impression of feeble assent is the only fruit of his arguments,—faint while the words were being spoken, and which, with the sound of the words, will die away.

Thus much, by way of apology for introducing, in so slight a work as the present, the subject of written style. The drift of what has been advanced is to shew that diction, or language, is not the separable accident of a discourse,—something which may be well-managed, without heightening its effect, or ill-managed, without weakening it,—but that it is both an element incorporate in the very formation of our ideas, and the connecting or transfusing medium, through which those ideas are to be received, or to be reproduced in other minds. If study can clarify that medium, we must use study. If there be rules and laws for making that medium more effective for its object, we may not despise rules and laws. An astronomer does not content himself with putting a telescope into the hands of a novice, and telling him that, by looking through it, he may discern a certain fixed star. He makes for him the requisite adjustments, raises the instrument or depresses it, till he has brought the object in direct line with the eye of the observer. Worthy and great truths can often be made apparent to another mind in a similar way. The language which is plain enough to represent them

to the conceiving mind, may not be plain enough for the unfamiliar hearer. Another illustrator will bring the mental image before his eye more clearly; not because he understands it better, or can reason about it better, but because he has been at more pains to adapt or vary the position of the observing instrument—to help a learner by putting his language into *shape*. The written style of the greatest thinker of the last century, Bishop Butler, may be cited as apposite to our argument. “No thinker so great,” says Sir James Macintosh (in language somewhat overstated, as we venture to submit) “was ever so bad a writer.” “His opinions were not so much rejected, as overlooked,” he adds. And he then passes on to note, what might have been the effect upon the ethical philosophy of all succeeding time, if the Bishop had “possessed the strength and distinctness with which Hobbes enforces odious falsehood, or the unspeakable charm of that transparent diction, which clothed the unfruitful paradoxes of Berkeley!”<sup>4</sup>

Admitting, however, that the cultivation of a good style is an important thing,—so important that, even in relation to the same truths, for one mind that would be influenced by the rich-laden but untrimmed sentences of Butler, more than ten would be led captive by the smooth flowing harmonies of Blair,—the question will next present itself what is the best style for the purposes of preaching? And here, with whatever differ-

<sup>4</sup> Dissertation on Ethical Philosophy, 4to., p. 247. Edin. 1835.

ence of meaning the word be understood, all suffrages will be united in recommending a PLAIN style. ‘Aim at what else you may,’ it will be said to us, ‘take care to be simple. Eschew all attempts at fine writing. Blot out, with ruthless hand, every allusion, reference, illustration, argument, which could not be apprehended by any mind of ordinary intelligence. And instead of your hard sesquipedalian Latinisms, or your long-tailed words in ‘osity’ and ‘ation’ see to it that all your thoughts are clothed in strong, terse, Saxon English.’

And the authority of great names, and great examples, will be urged in support of such counsel. “Better that the learned should find fault, than that the people should not understand,” says Augustine.<sup>5</sup> “A preacher is to fancy himself in the room of the most unlearned man in the parish,” writes Bishop Burnet.<sup>6</sup> Of Archbishop Tillotson, it is related, that he was in the habit of reading his sermons to “an illiterate old woman, of plain sense, who lived with him,” and of altering his words and expressions till he had brought down the style “to her level.”<sup>7</sup> Whilst an authority quoted, with more frequency than fairness, and with more confidence than learning, in such a connection, is that of the Apostle Paul himself, in the words “Seeing then

<sup>5</sup> *Melius est ut nos reprehendant grammatici, quam ut non intelligent populi.* (In Ps. cxxxix. 15.)

<sup>6</sup> *Pastoral Care* ch. ix.

<sup>7</sup> *Campbell on Pulpit Eloquence.* Lect. iii.

that we have such hope we use great plainness of speech.”<sup>8</sup>

Let us look at the principles involved in this statement, whether as they bear upon the acknowledged rules of rhetoric, or in their aspect towards the present condition and requirements of society, or even as they find countenance in the discourses of our Lord, and other parts of the Word of God.

I. And first, with regard to so much of these counsels for a perfect style, as would seem to refer to the *choice of particular words*,—to the preference of those which are derived from one root, before those which are derived from another,—and, generally, to the selection of those words which are most easily “understood of the people.”

Now, taking the last condition first, we presume it will be agreed that the words most easily understood by all classes, are those which are of the most familiar and frequent occurrence. And, if so, it would seem to be quite right to assign to this rule of verbal selection, a place before all others. To Cicero, the perfection of written language was the employment of words in daily use.<sup>9</sup> Use, to Horace, we know, was the canon

<sup>8</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 12. The Apostle's word is *παρρησία*; in the margin and elsewhere in the New Testament rendered BOLDNESS.

<sup>9</sup> Utinam et verba in usu quotidiano posita minus timeremus. Cic.



law of all correct eloquence.<sup>10</sup> Of course, we should eschew the debased, and the corrupt, and the vulgar in expression, however frequent the use of it, by the illiterate and the ignorant; just as we ought to reject the unauthorized conventions and coinings of persons in higher life, which multitudes, nevertheless, will be found ready to endorse. We shall feel that no pretended plainness in the use of language will compensate for an inflicted wound upon its purity. Language, to a public teacher, is a sacred trust. There is not only a history in it; but, what is more, there is often a subtle and profound morality.<sup>11</sup> And the man who tampers with its purity, by the admixture of a base alloy, is as a Vandal who destroys a precious monument; or as a faithless ruler, who, by a change in the currency, introduces confusion into all the compacts of civil life. With all our respect for the author of the well-known essay, "on the aversion of men of taste to evangelical religion," and, with a confidence that he has done true service to a good cause, we are a little afraid of some of those "holiday and lady terms," which he would substitute for the peculiarities of our theological dialect;—as when for "walk and conversation" he would have us put "conduct and deportment," or for

10

Si volet usus

Quem penes arbitrium est, et jus, et norma loquendi.

<sup>11</sup> See the beautiful treatise of Dean Trench on "The Study of Words," *passim*.



“the desires of the flesh,” would substitute “natural inclination.”<sup>12</sup> There is a truthfulness, a racy strength in the old Bible phrase, which we feel to lose in the transfer to a more classical diction,—as much as when Tillotson puts virtue for godliness, or as when Blair describes the faith of God’s elect by the sleek euphemism of “humble trust in the favour of heaven.”

But what, as helpful to great plainness of speech, do we say to the recommended selection of words of a particular derivation,—this strong vernacular Saxon English that people talk about? “To those who wish to be understood by the lower orders of the English,” says Archbishop Whateley, “one of the best principles of selection is to prefer terms of Saxon origin, which will generally be more familiar to them than those derived from the Latin, either directly or through the medium of the French.”<sup>13</sup> Now, as opposed to the Ciceronian canon of selecting words, adverted to in the last paragraph, and which was based upon the current usage of the many, we must say we prefer the rule of the pagan orator, to that of the Christian bishop,—the “*usus quotidianus*,” to the study of etymons. A man could hardly keep to this study, as a rule of writing, without acquiring a trick of ridiculous and transparent pedantry,—exhibiting all the fastidiousness of a polished style without its grace; and shackling himself

<sup>12</sup> Foster's Essays. Essay iv. Let. iii.

<sup>13</sup> Rhetoric, Part III. c. i. § 2.

with the niceties of great verbal exactitude, without ensuring either clearness or precision to his thought. For our vernacular is not exclusively Saxon, any more than it is exclusively Latin or French. We have a strong, idiomatic, household English among us, made up of words from all roots; and any sentence, expressed in this language, would not be improved, though every word, of Latin origin, should be weeded out, and replaced by the most perfect Saxon equivalent we could find. Take, almost at random, any sentence from the received version of St. Paul's Epistles, as for instance, "To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life."<sup>14</sup> Here is a verse almost full of Latinisms; and yet, even to the most uneducated mind, could any number of Saxon substitutions make the passage plainer? And so of words from other roots. Would it have simplified, to the apprehension of the unlearned hearer, Nathan's parable of the ewe-lamb, if our translators had written "And there came 'one who was walking' to the rich man?" Or would the immortal work of Bunyan have been more popular, if he had called it "The Wayfarer's path?" No; the authors of our received translation had as little care for this philo-Saxon affectation, as the Bedford tinman. They would no more reject the word "traveller," because it was French, than he would reject the word "progress,"

<sup>14</sup> Rom ii. 7.

because it was Latin. The words were retained by both for the same reason,—namely, that they were true, household, naturalized English;—good as the purest dialect of the times of Hengist and Horsa, and even to the poorest of our people, quite as intelligible.

We protest, then, against this much-lauded cultivation of a style, consisting mainly of words of Saxon root, as a condition not necessary to the easy comprehension of hearers, and, on the writer or speaker a most irksome and embarrassing restraint. It is not fair to an advocate to tie up his sword-arm in this way; to gag his mouth, until he will promise, not only to utter the Saxon Shibboleth, but also that he will utter nothing else. The language he has to speak in, is a broad, rich, ample composite, made up of every nation's best, and a fit vehicle for the great thoughts of all time. Why is he to be tethered to the bare and close-cropped pastures of his Teutonic forefathers, instead of being allowed to roam, at will, amid the rich glossaries which have helped to form his vernacular,—selecting any word that will give a stronger momentum to his sentence, or a more expressive fullness to his thought. We repeat, it is not the derivation of a word which makes it intelligible, but its familiar use. Only let an expression have been stamped in the mint of our fireside discourse, and the unlearned hearer will understand it, come from what root it will.

II. But the plainness, commonly insisted upon as so great a virtue in preaching, is not limited to an interdict upon *hard words*. It fixes its inexorable ban upon every illustration, reference, train of reasoning, or mode of thought, with which a given section of the hearers have not the power to sympathize, however much such things might interest or attract the rest. The preacher is to place before him a *typical* or *representative* mind,—that of Tillotson's venerable female parishioner, for instance. For power of argument, range of subject, style of expression, extent of assumed reading, there is his gauge. There may be things, properly belonging to the matter in hand, which many would like to hear, and which it would be profitable for them to hear. But they are things which would present only a dead blank to the model mind. A sharp fixed boundary defines his teaching. And these things are above the line.

Now the first observation it seems natural to make, on hearing of this arbitrary standard of intelligence, which is to serve for a whole congregation, has respect to the *unfairness*, in the principle of selection. Reverting to the practice of Tillotson,—why was the squire of the parish, or the lawyer, or the thoughtful burgher's son, who delighted to lay out his savings at a book-stall, to be deprived each one of his proper Sunday food, lest it should be too strong for the intellectual digestion of a certain member of the Archbishop's household? Let her have her portion of milk, by all means. The

sermon is a very bad sermon, which does not contain some of *that*. But "*sum cuique*." Educated people have souls as well as others,—souls, too, which are to be reached by the ministry of the Word. And the reason, certainly, is not apparent, why, if we are to descend to the homely illustration, in order to interest the wayfarer and the weak, we should not sometimes rise to the higher walks of reasoning and exact thought, to win the reflecting and the wise. The Scripture character of a good steward is that he is one who considers himself as having rule over "*the whole household*," and therefore bound to give to all "*their portion of meat in due season.*"<sup>15</sup>

Nor less obvious is it to remark that, upon such a theory of plain preaching, a teacher of religion in faith and verity, would well nigh find his occupation gone. There would be shut against him the entire field of controversial theology. He must run through the cycle of the Christian year, and yet scarcely touch upon its characteristic mysteries. He must keep an "*index expurgatorius*" of texts, which would include whole chapters in the writings of St. Paul;—whilst the infidel objection, and the philosophical difficulty, and even the hard things, patent on the surface of the text he may be discussing, must all be passed over in silence, because there is demanded for the discussion of them a larger exercise of the logical faculty, than the chosen

<sup>15</sup> Luke xii. 42.

type of congregational capacity could be expected to put forth.

But, in these accommodations of our preaching style to the lowest intellectual strata of our congregations, there is a yet further danger, namely, lest the plain should become *too* plain ;—lest the simple should border too closely upon the childish ; and the familiar should degenerate into the common ; and the poor of our flock should be offended at the insult offered to their mental inferiority,—as if the discourse was one specially prepared for “the poor man with a vile raiment,” and which we should not think of offering to “a man with a gold ring and goodly apparel.” Even in the generally striking and admired sermons of Mr. Hare, we find passages, constantly, which seem open to this censure. Surely many modes might be thought of for setting forth the sanctity, attaching to holy places, without giving as an illustration, that “a man would never bring a horse into a garden or walk over the strawberry beds, though in riding over Salisbury Plain he would feel himself at liberty to gallop over the turf.” Whilst it was, to say the least of it, an undignified comparison, when the neglect of the Prayer Book, by those who could get Bibles cheaply, was compared to a man “who should omit to sow turnips and potatoes in his garden because he had some of both in his fields.”

Now it is most certain that the poor do not like these condescensions on the part of educated men ; do not feel at all flattered by the mean estimate thus formed



of their capacity. Nor is there any reason why they should. In point of original intellectual endowments, there is no difference between the scholar in the pulpit, and the artizan in the pew. The strong intellect, without the technical advantages of education, will be more than a match for the weak intellect, with all the advantages of artificial training on its side. The poor may be our inferiors in mental culture, but not in rational power, not in shrewdness of perception, not in common sense. Unknown to them as may be the very terms of the dialectic art, they can follow you through the steps of a well-constructed argument; and though they may never have heard of Aristotle or Longinus, they can appreciate noble thoughts, and love a flowing style.

Moreover, even if the poor of our congregation *should* be as low, in the intellectual scale, as our condescensions seem to assume, is it our duty, as teachers, to keep them in that state? Are we to be always feeding them upon the most homely and meagre diet,—with milk too diluted and weak for children, as if childish things were never to be put away, and the babes were never to become men? Surely the duty of a public instructor is to *advance* his people in knowledge; to get them out of the narrow circle of their own crude thoughts; to try their young strength, by little and little, as the mother-bird teaches her young to fly, till they can leave their nest fearlessly, and soar with



her to higher things. "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange god with them."<sup>16</sup> True, we may often fail of our object, but better this, than that the attempt should not be made. Nothing is gained by keeping down the mind of the humbler classes to its own dwarfish standard; by forbidding it to rise, if it would. 'To many, I may speak in vain,' should be the language of the Christian teacher, 'and with many may have to spend my strength for nought. But I would rather a few should say I was hard to understand, than that *all* should think me weak; and would sooner lose a few arrows, by shooting over the heads of my people, than, by a despised and insipid homeliness, see them all fall under their feet.'

1. Tending to the same point of ensuring perfect plainness in a discourse, is the advice, so constantly urged upon preachers, to be very *simple* in their style. Right counsel enough, if we understand it rightly. Thus, if the exhortation be intended to caution us against the tendency to use an involved and abstruse form of expression, where a more familiar phrase would do; or the habit of overloading a sentence with superfluous and meretricious ornament; or the affectation of saying a common thing in some very novel and uncom-

<sup>16</sup> Deut. xxxii. 11.

mon way;—in a word, if it be a protest against all tinsel, and tawdriness, and circumlocution, and mysticalness, and learned impertinences,—we cannot take heed to the warning too diligently. But, if when we are told to “be simple,” it is meant, that we are always to put down the first thoughts that occur to us; to present them in their native, bald, common-place form; to pay no regard to the graces of style, either to neatness in the structure of a sentence, or to the musical rhythm of its flow;—if it mean that, in our statements of truth, we are to eschew all imaginative aids, neither confirming our positions by analogy, nor heightening them by metaphor, nor bringing in any striking illustration,—from history, from nature, from fictions that all read about, or from facts that all know,—but that we are to make a virtue of saying the most obvious and insipid things, in the most trite and insipid way,—then do we utterly repudiate this recommendation to *be simple*; and denounce it, either as the imbecile suggestion of a very impoverished mind, or as the device of Satan to drive our people from the Church.

But let us look at this theory of “simplicity” a little more closely. It may be considered as opposed to a style which is either too *diffuse*, or too *ornate*, or too *artificial* and *elaborate*. Thus, taking “simplicity,” in its strict etymological sense, as the opposite of “multiplicity,” we may understand the caution, as intimating that we are not to use two words, when our meaning

can be expressed by one ; that, instead of round-about elegancies, we should use words which lead the mind up to our meaning at once ; that we should carefully avoid all long-drawn, fatiguing, labyrinthine sentences ; and that we should not beat out our thoughts into gold-leaf thinness,—distributing, over several pages, an illustration, which one strong, vigorous paragraph would have expressed quite as well. Offences these are, against simplicity, no doubt ; and instances of them are to be found in writers of great name and power ;—in the sonorous redundancies of Johnson, or in the languid prettinesses of Blair ;—in the heavy-charged, page-long, concatenations of Kant, or in the endless varieties of pose, and hue, and form, with which Chalmers brings the same thought before us again and again.

And yet there may be opposites to these vices, which, for preaching purposes, at all events, are not virtues. The “*ne quid nimis*” is a caution which applies to extremes in the sharp and compressed style, also,—to the short sentence, with its rich freight of thought ; to the indicated argument, which we leave the hearer to work out ; to the rapidly thrown-off illustration, which, having announced, we take no further trouble to expand. Few hearers, it may be believed, can follow a discourse, composed on the plan of this severe conciseness. And that, for this simple reason, that they ARE hearers,—are listening to a speaker whom they

must keep up with ; and not reading from a book, which they can lay down, and think over, till the scope of the argument is mastered, or the drift of the allusion is taken in.

As against simplicity, in the strictest sense, therefore, we must claim a dispensation for the preacher,—a tolerated looseness and repetition, which, in a book, would be called a vice. He cannot afford to be always terse, and cramped, and elliptical. If the thought he wishes to express, be one, essential to the proper development of his subject, he must bring it out fully. He must linger upon it ; turn it round ; place it under the most varied lights he can think of. Here and there, a quick and practised intellect, in the congregation, will get weary at the re-appearance of the old thought in a new dress, and be tempted to say, as, perhaps, some of us do, in reading Chalmers, “*Ecce ! iterum Crispinus.*” But this change of mask is the preacher’s necessity. His hearers have no book in their hand. He must see that they have mastered one thought, before he goes on to the next.

We cannot, then, accept this rule to be “simple,” if it mean, either that we must say what we have to say in the fewest possible words, or if it forbid us to say the same thing twice over, though it be said in a different way. “Let these sayings sink down into your ears,” said the Great Teacher, in the midst of one of His discourses. But, if we content ourselves with the enun-

ciation of a great doctrine, and that in the most condensed form, the saying will not have time to sink down. While the mind is busy about it, "here and there, it is gone." Where is the wrong of detaining the thought before the mind of a hearer, whether by a new image, or even by an altered form of words? I cannot tell in what way illustrations of the folly of carefulness, may affect this mind or that. But I have the best warrant for using a second illustration, lest some hearers should not apprehend the first. "Behold the fowls of the air," I would say to this man:—to that, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow."

2. Look at this recommended simplicity, next, as it is opposed to all excess of *ornament*, in style. Many persons seem to have such an intense dread of anything which might be considered "fine writing," that they form their style upon the most severely prosaic model,—looking with scorn upon all poetic embellishment, and eschewing elegance of expression, as if it were a sin. But there may be a pedantry in simplicity, even as there may be pride in mean attire. And it is pedantry,—a violence and an offence to nature,—for a man, having emotions of profoundest awe to appeal to, and subjects of sublimest interest for his theme, to keep down his language to the same level of meagre, uniform, unalleviated flatness,—neither to the ear, with all its pleasure in harmony, nor to the mind with its love for an ideal world, presenting the semblance of rise or fall.

And what is the warrant of a preacher for ostracising all imaginative aids from a popular address? Not in any original want of susceptibility, in the human mind, to receive instruction through such a medium, it is certain. For, as has been often observed, nothing can be more metaphorical than the original language of savages; whilst, in all languages, the most striking words, among those that are in familiar use, may be traced up to some figurative root,—men seeming to have made their words out of pictures, and only to have ascended to abstractions by the steps of the concrete.<sup>17</sup> Neither can an excuse, for a dry and frigid baldness of style, be found in the special incapacity of our own poor to appreciate an imaginative or ornate style. What was before advanced, in relation to the power of our artizan class to grapple with a straightforward, manly argument, applies still more to their sympathy with a well-drawn rhetorical picture. Their illiterateness implies no deficiency of the poetic temperament,—far otherwise. They will commonly enter into a skilful and well-sustained illustration as keenly as we can do,—relish the beauties of it as heartily, and detect its failing points as soon. Look at the hold which the “Pilgrims’ Progress” has upon their religious imagination to this day. Watch the effect, with which a supposititious illustration is always listened to from the pulpit. In the way of fixing attention, there is nothing, to them,

<sup>17</sup> See some examples in Whately’s *Rhetoric*, Part III., c. i., § 3.



like the allegory.<sup>18</sup> They love it, because it exercises their powers of imagination. They like the feeling of pleased surprise, which accompanies the perception of resemblances they had never thought of. They delight to see moral truth standing out before their eyes in bodily form, and things which they talk about, and feel, and handle, made vehicles of lofty instruction, as well as types of their own spiritual and inner life. Indeed, as an ingredient in the intellectual constitution, poetry has probably a larger place with our humbler classes, than with the higher. No one, who has mixed much with them, can fail to have noticed how largely, even in their most familiar conversation, they draw upon the inventive faculty. They can neither reason, nor describe, nor exhort, without it. Analogy has the first place in their dialectics, and the metaphor is the first thing they fly to, when they wish to be energetic, and impressive, and plain.

Least of all, we suppose, will countenance, for a cold, hard, poverty-stricken style, be sought for in the examples furnished by Holy Scripture. For these would condemn it at every page. Where shall we find eloquence, availing itself more largely of the resources of the rhetorician's art, yet without the slightest appearance of any such effort, than it does in the addresses of

<sup>18</sup> Old Fuller says, "Reasons are the pillars of the fabric of a sermon, but similitudes are the windows which give the best lights."



St. Paul? Where shall we find dramas, constructed with more consummate and artistic skill, than those which are presented to us in the history of Joseph, or in the book of Job? Where does imagination revel in richer pastures, or language give forth its sounds in more melodious cadence, than in the rapt ecstasies of the prophets, or in the sweet music of the Psalms? And who, so much as our Divine Lord Himself, has laid all nature under tribute, to supply Him with exuberant and majestic images,—making of the visible universe a system of spiritual types, and from things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, bringing in His illustrations of the truth of God? And, in the case of this last and most sublime Example, we know what acceptance this richly-imaged style of speaking met with,—and from whom. There were some, in whose hearts every word touched a ready and responsive chord. “The common people heard him gladly.”<sup>19</sup>

One word of caution, however, may be allowed here. There can be no doubt, that, both with the poor, and with a very large class, who, in point of education, are above the poor, there is a decided partiality for the ornamental in style;—for the ornamental, and something more;—namely, for the tawdry, and the affected, and the fine; for the ambitious simile, and the high-sounding phrase. And, to some preachers, it is a

<sup>19</sup> Mark vi. 20.

temptation,—not in baseness of soul, either, or in mere hankering after popularity, but with an honest desire to keep the attention awake,—to humour this false taste. Can it be necessary to tell them, that, to the extent to which they do this,—knowingly, and against what, according to the canons of good writing, they feel to be lawful and right,—they are doing lasting damage to the religious literature of their country ; and, to the cause of God and His truth, are shewing themselves anything but real friends. It is to no purpose to say that so little are these canons understood by the great majority of those who hear us, that, for one hearer whom we may disgust by this hollow finery, we shall captivate, or, at least, please ten. Moral results cannot be measured by these coarse numerical tests ; seeing that we can never tell the relative influence of the *one* person, who has been so far alienated from the truth, compared with that of the *ten*, who, on such worthless grounds, have given it a favourable hearing. But there is no necessity, in order to our influence with others, to give offence to the intelligent hearer at all. There is a true in style, as well as an honest in morals. And to adhere to the *right*, is the best policy in both cases. Of the minds that care much about the beauties of composition, there are very few which would not be attracted by the genuine, at least, quite as easily, as by the counterfeit ;—by the fine gold of a chastened eloquence, as by the base lacker of a decorated rant. At all

events, as public teachers, we are bound to vindicate, for the pulpit, a pure style. This is expected of us from our education ; from the sacredness of our office : from that sentiment of conscientious reverence, which should make us shrink, at all times, from having recourse to the exaggerated or the unreal, in the service of God.

3. One other aspect of this required simplicity has to be noted ; namely, as it is assumed to stand out in contrast to all *elaboration in style* ; to all mechanical and artificial stiffness ; to all that paring, and pruning, and finical smoothing down of sentences, which, besides being very unnatural, is ruinous to all that is masculine or strong in thought.

Now, surely, there is a good deal of false assumption, in these commonly urged objections against carefully considered, or well-finished writing. Thus, with regard to the assumed opposition between the elaborate and the natural, in writing,—why, the very design of all elaboration of style, is to make it more natural. Then, mechanical polish is excepted to, as savouring too much of the artist. But there may be art, without the display of art ; and the more careful the finish of the literary workman, the less will appear any residual traces of his tools. Whilst, lastly, it is assumed that all our most worthy intellectual conceptions are strongest at the time of birth ; that they come full-formed, like Minerva, from the mint of thought,—

as ready to take their place, at once, in the printed page, as the goddess was to sit down forthwith in the conclave of her peers.

Hence, the recommendation *to be simple*, as we are here considering it, seems to amount to this;—first, that we are not required to take pains to present our thoughts in the most perfect form we can; and next that, in any pains we may take, we should reject all aids from the rhetoric art. Now the “art” part of the question we shall not stay to consider. It seems obvious to remark, that if, without a cultivated knowledge of fundamental rules, we should never expect to find good architecture, or good music, or good painting, an early acquaintance with such rules might be found helpful to good writing also, whilst ignorance of them could hardly fail to betray a man into grievous mistakes.<sup>20</sup> But let us look at the avowed end of these rules. This, as applied to preaching or writing, we might describe to be,—to bring out a thought, present to our own mind, with a *clearness* to be understood at once, with a *strength* to impress at once, and, if possible, with a *beauty* to delight at once. Do any of us throw off sentences of

<sup>20</sup> Speaking of inattention to the laws of correct writing, De Quincey observes, “Hence an anomaly, not found perhaps in any literature but ours, that the most eminent English writers do not write their mother tongue without continual violations of propriety . . . scarcely two consecutive pages being without some flagrant impropriety in the grammar, or some violation, more or less, of the vernacular idiom.” Selections, Grave and Gay, pp. 71, 72.

this kind at a stroke? Do we never find, after we have written a sentence down for the first time, that it admits of improvement? Do we not often shift the position of the predicate, transpose a qualifying clause, here insert, there strike out—not for art's sake—for of this, at the time, we are not thinking, but because we feel that nature did NOT express herself in the best way, at first; and that, if we would do justice to our own conceptions, we must have bold recourse to the pruning-knife, as well as try to smooth down with the file.

Let it be observed, that, so far as the injunction to be *simple* is directed against all trick, or artifice in style; all frigid and heartless sentence-making; against that false symmetry, which Pascal well likens to a sham window in domestic architecture, or that mock antithesis which, even if its one member have any meaning, the other is no more than “a tinkling cymbal,”—we accept it in all sincerity. Our demurrer is against simplicity, as it is supposed to be inconsistent with pains, and patience, and thoughtful care. And a dispensation from these no great speakers or writers have ever asked for. Demosthenes, in order to perfect his style, is said to have transcribed Thucydides many times over. Virgil wished his “Æneid” to be burned, because it was wanting in care and finish. Gibbon made three copies of the first chapter of his history before he could be satisfied it would do. And Addison is said to have allowed the time for sending off

an important state-paper to pass by, because he wanted leisure for a more fastidious revise.<sup>21</sup>

What, then, is the simplicity we ought to aim at, and what is *plain preaching*? Why, it is preaching so that we may be understood,—if possible, so that we cannot be misunderstood—presenting thoughts, worth hearing, in their clearest, strongest, most effective and winning form. Sentences, moulded after this fashion, will often appear very easy, and very artless. But they are easy only to the hearer, and are artless because the art has been concealed. Few men think in perfect sentences; any more than an artist, in a first sketch, could throw off a finished picture. There is nothing, in which the *limæ labor* will be required more, than in writing a simple sermon. To be plain, but not familiar; concise, yet not obscure; forcible, yet not inelegant; to be intelligible to the humblest, and yet not distasteful to the most fastidious mind,—is no inborn intellectual gift. To read Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," and see the exquisite naturalness with which each word falls into its place, as if there could have been no choice between that and any other, we might have supposed it

<sup>21</sup> See Dr. Newman's Lectures on University Subjects, pp. 52, 53. Many other instances will occur. Burke revised his "Thoughts on the French Revolution," again and again. Lord Brougham wrote his finest speeches many times over. Rousseau wrote his "Emile," nine times, finding it so difficult to invent words that would reach others, says Vinet. See Homiletics, p. 327.



was one of those poems, which Horace tells us a man may write "*stans pede in uno*." But the poet's own account of the matter is, that this short and very simple poem cost him three years to produce. And similar things are related of other writers, remarkable for the easy flow of their language. Sterne's smoothnesses were achieved only at the expence of the greatest elaboration. Passages in Sheridan's speeches were written several times with the utmost care. Burns, whose homely pictures of Scottish life astonish all by their simplicity, spent hours over them, while engaged at his work, before he penned a line; whilst Moore was sometimes a whole month in writing and polishing to perfection, a single song.<sup>22</sup>

Such waste of precious time is not asked of the preacher. The instances are adduced only to show that pains-taking is not the antagonist of simplicity, but the handmaid to it,—not the hindrance to a natural and unfettered style, but the means by which it may be most surely reached. Experience has proved abundantly, that so far from the off-hand composition being the most perspicuous and simple, it is the hurried sermon that is usually verbose and complicated, and the

<sup>22</sup> The smooth-flowing ease of Rogers's poetry will be allowed by all. Yet the particulars of the time he took in composing them, extracted from his Common-place Book are, that his "Italy" cost him fifteen years, his "Columbus" fourteen, years, and his "Pleasures of Memory," seven years. Recollections by Samuel Rogers. Preface, p. lxvii.



unrevised matter that is hard to understand. "You were very long to-day," said a friend to a preacher on one occasion,—“long” being a polite euphemism for tedious. “Yes,” was the reply, “I was long, because I had so short a time to prepare.” And the rule obtains always. The perspicuity and ease which we admire in such writers as Addison, or Southey, or Ogden,—that happy attainment of rhetorical excellence, described by the Roman orator in the words “*apte dicere*,”—comes not, as a rule, of an impromptu flash of thought, but is the result, in each separate paragraph, of a severe regard to expression; a careful poising of momentum; the lopping off of all verbal surplusage; and a diligent turning round of all the parts and members of a sentence, until it shall be transparent as the light for its clearness, and forcible as right words for its strength. No doubt there may be *born* orators, even as there are *born* poets; men who, in the fearless vigour and fertility of their verbal resources, seem to play with language as with a toy; pawing, as the war-horse in the valley, and rejoicing in strength; able to call up, as from the deep, mighty words for their mighty thoughts, and always sure of their coming, when they call them. But, on the other hand, it should be remembered that there is no attainment, more than this of good expression, in which diligent study may make up for the deficiencies of genius; or, in which, a reward is more sure to follow on faithful and persisting toil. At all events, one thing is certain. Nothing but

failure can be hoped for from negligence, from looseness, from a careless or conceited indifference in the preacher, to those habits of pruning and revising, by which even genius adds richness to its conceptions, and great thinkers simplify the abstrusest theme. Of hasty homiletics the Nemesis is both sure and righteous. The preacher composes easily. The hearers will forget as soon. Industry and laziness bring forth their appointed fruits, in all that man puts his hand unto; and both husbandman and preacher shall find that saying of the wise man true—"In all labour there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Prov. xiv. 23.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF PREACHING.

Paramount authority of Scripture—We must preach THE WORD—

I. In its *unity*—As one truth—One morality—Ethical element of Old Testament Scriptures—II. In its *integrity*—Partiality of preachers for particular departments of theological teaching—III. In the rightful order and precedence of its fundamental truths—The Atonement—the work of the Spirit—What is “preaching Christ?”—IV. In the impartial exhibition of its complementary and correlative doctrines—Predestination and Free Agency—Free Grace—Faith and Works—V. In its universal adaptations—Preaching on the events of the day—Evils of political preaching—Experimental preaching—The relation of Christianity to the affections—Concluding cautions.

IN a former chapter, in which we designed to bring out, more prominently, the *teaching* function of the preacher, we laid stress upon the fact, that the foundation of his authority is “a BOOK, a document, something which is to be taught.”<sup>1</sup> The thought meets us again in entering upon the subject of our present chapter. That which is at the foundation of our authority for un-

<sup>1</sup> Chap. ii. p. 22.

dertaking the office of preacher, is also the paramount directory for our practice, both as to how we shall preach, and what we shall preach about. Every thing needful to salvation is contained in THE BOOK. We may enforce nothing but what may be found therein, or can be proved thereby. And the restriction is as condescending in design, as it is convenient in practice;—condescending, in that it prescribes so narrow a range, within which we are to search for truth; and convenient, in that it supplies us with a rule, at hand always, for determining when the truth is found. Specially should we be thankful for the limit, in this last respect. Nothing strikes us more, in the history of religious controversy, than the necessity and advantage of our being, for all vital truth, shut up to the conclusions of one supreme and over-riding authority;—relegating to an infinite remove from *that one*, all supplementary traditions, all the writings of councils, all the interpretations of Christian antiquity. Not that we are called upon to despise any of these, or to refuse aid from them; but that, in determining the question what we *must*, and what we *must not* teach, we are glad to have a gulf which nothing can bridge over,—separating opinion from authority, the erring from the infallible, the human from the Divine. In regard of the matter, then, to come into our sermons, here are our limits. Enlarge as we may, illustrate as we may, deduce applications as we may, our subject is *the Gospel*. We must PREACH THE WORD.

Admitting, however, that the Bible is sufficient to decide for us, generally, the topics which should *come into* a sermon, or those which should be *kept out*, what are the considerations which must govern us in the selection of the admissible things? By what rule are we to be guided, in setting them forth in their related order and connection? How far is it permitted us to assign, to some truths, a second place, in the order of Divine communications? and to what extent are we required to give, to some aspects of revelation, a more marked and frequent prominence? Some answers to these questions will, probably, be brought out, in the discussion of a few general principles which we propose to consider,—all based upon the hypothesis, that the subject-matter of preaching, is THE WORD.

I. Thus, we think care should be taken to preach that Word, in its essential and unchanging UNITY,—that is, as a body of revealed truth, “fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth,”—the product of an Infinite intelligence, which knows “neither variableness nor shadow of turning.”

We introduce the mention of this, in order to guard against any undue exaltation of the New Testament over the Old,—against any uncareful methods of speaking of the two books, which might leave an impression of their being, not the same, but a different truth,—having a theology of different hopes and promises, and

even a morality referred to a different rule. The error may be found only in very young preachers, perhaps; but, we err, if dispensations are not sometimes spoken of too much, as if they were *changes* in the mind of God, instead of being, as they manifestly are, mere *developments* of that mind,—adapted to the progressive condition of religious civilization and religious thought. The effect of this misapprehension is to lead to an under-valuing estimate of the Old Testament; to cause a preacher to ignore or keep back a good deal of the Christian teaching contained in it; and even to make him adopt an under-toned humbleness in speaking of some of its facts and statements, as if they were things to be apologised for,—to be explained, on the plea of suitableness to the genius of an economy, which has passed away. Such a mode of speaking of the older Scriptures, we must all feel to be at once dishonouring, and dangerous. The entire fabric of our Christianity is too intimately bound up with faith in the Jewish record, to allow the slightest shadow of mistrust to be cast, either upon the identity of its theology with our own, or upon the moral purity and perfectness of its rules of life. The glory of the later dispensation is “a glory that excelleth;” but it is not a glory that “contradicteth.” “It exceeds in glory,” by reason of the brighter effulgence it sheds upon the objects of revelation,—not because it makes any change in the objects themselves.



By preaching the Word, in *its unity*, therefore, we mean that both in the doctrines revealed, and in the morality inculcated, the Old Testament and the New are to be carefully represented as one book,—one truth, coming from the one same and Eternal Mind. We shall aim to show that the theology of the two books is one. What has been called the “Christology” of the Old Testament, will be brought out with prominence and distinctness. The agency of the Holy Spirit will be shewn to be, not so exclusively the promise of the new dispensation, as the inspiring source of all that is great, or good, in every age of the Church of God. No place will be left for sympathy with the flippant taunts of Byron or Gibbon, by our preaching that life and immortality were *first* brought to light by the Gospel; <sup>2</sup> whilst, instead of speaking of the moral law in terms, which neither “magnify it, nor make it honourable,” we shall uphold it, as the unchanging directory for the moral agent, to the end of time,—as the beneficent source, from which we derive our “knowledge of sin;” as well as “the schoolmaster,” which leads to Him who is to take our sins away.

Nor less jealous, in this view, shall we be for the

<sup>2</sup> The word φωτίζειν, observes Professor Blunt, implies rather the making a thing more clear than it was before. Yet overlooking this, Bishop Warburton, in his *Divine Legation*, quotes this text, as supporting his view of the ignorance of the Jews of a future state.

*ethical* element of the Old Testament; for the vindicated honour of the Divine Majesty, in relation to the sins or infirmities of good men; never conveying the idea that, in deference to the lowered moral tone of an age or people, the Almighty had given a dispensation which sanctioned any thing exceptionable, or false, or wrong. When Lord Bacon brings it as a complaint against Puritan theology or Puritan logic, that the divines of that school “have pronounced generally and without difference, all untruths unlawful; notwithstanding that the midwives are directly reported to have been blessed for their excuse; and Rahab is said, by faith, to have concealed the spies; and Solomon’s selected judgment proceeded upon a simulation,”<sup>3</sup> we all feel that the preachers were better read, in Divine ethics, than was the philosopher; seeing that a time never was, and never could be, when God did not look with infinite abhorrence, upon whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie. Exceptionable things do occur, in the Old Testament narratives, no doubt, and that because they *are* narratives. The Bible is a record of history; and holy men were inspired to *relate*, what they were not inspired to justify, and which they have said nothing to *approve*. The more than half-hinted explanation of difficulties in the Old Testament narratives, which we sometimes hear,—namely, that the former dispensation was inferior to the Gospel, in

<sup>3</sup> Advertisement touching the controversies of the Church of England.

ethical purity and perfectness,—that it could excuse cruelty more ; allow of revenges more ; look with more tolerant eye on departures from truth and uprightness,—involves conclusions fraught with much danger. We believe that a man's faith in the theology of the Bible will soon go, if he once come to lose faith in its ethics. It is not our purpose, here, to say, what are the best explanations to be offered of the falsehoods of Abraham, or the duplicity of Jacob, or the violation of the rights of hospitality by Jael. We are only saying, that of all explanations, that is the *worst*, which refers these things to an allowed inferiority in the morality of the Old Testament,—which leaves the hearer to suppose that it *could* be, either within the purpose or power of a dispensation, to make that morally *right* in one age, which, under the same circumstances, would be morally *wrong* in another. Such a handling of sacred things is to “turn the truth of God into a lie.”

II. Again, it should be our aim to preach the Word in all its INTEGRITY and entireness, as against anything of keeping back, whether to please others or ourselves.

Observe that word of the angel to Peter and John, on their being liberated from prison:—“Go stand and speak in the temple to the people ALL the words of this life.”<sup>4</sup> Or that language of the apostle to the elders of Ephesus:—“How I *kept back* nothing that was profitable

<sup>4</sup> Acts v. 20.

unto you ;” and again, “ For I have not shunned to declare unto you *all the counsel of God.*”<sup>5</sup>

These words seem intended to put us on our guard against that mutilated or partial teaching, in which, through an over-fondness for particular aspects of theological truth, a man is betrayed into negligence, if not into culpable silence, about all the rest. Something in his education, something in the constitution of his own mental and moral habits, something, it may be, of mark and emphasis in the circumstances of his own religious history, has caused certain views of doctrine, or phases of revelation, to take firmer hold of his mind than any other. He draws all his studies that way ;—makes every subject to have some bearing upon it ;—dislocating and wrenching texts out of their most obvious connection, to make them say something in support of his favourite theme. Perhaps he belongs to a school, which seeks to exalt, inordinately, the grace of sacraments. And then so constantly are these referred to, in his discourses, and with such awful charm and mystery are they made to be invested, that it is no marvel if the vulgar mind,—and some minds that are not vulgar, too,—come to regard these institutions, not, as what Hooker calls them, the “ moral instruments of our salvation,” but as some material talisman for making that salvation sure. Or, perhaps, the teacher is one, who loves to soar into the high regions of the Divine predestina-

<sup>5</sup> Acts xx. 27.

tions. And then, the Alpha and Omega of all Gospel teaching is the believer's personal election in Christ ;—not put forth, as a great fact of our religious philosophy, which it is,—nor yet proposed as a “comfort to those who feel, in themselves, the working of the Spirit of Christ,” which, as our Article declares, it ought to be,—but a bare, bald, and unqualified announcement of God's secret purposes to individuals ; thus tempting men to argue from the fact of an eternal choice to their sure participation of its promised blessings ; instead of leading them, from the discovery of the inward witness to their Christianity, to deduce the fact of an eternal choice. Or again, the temper of a preacher's mind may lead him to the fascinating study of unfulfilled prophecy ; and that, not only without observing strictly the limits of the Scriptural permissions upon such enquiries ; but also without any of those fixed principles, as to the laws and rules of prophetic interpretation, which could satisfy any reasoning or reflecting mind. And then he is for ever discerning signs, and decomposing mystic numbers, and fixing infallible dates, for this future event or that,—till he seems to be always taking his hearers up into the clouds,—into the third heaven of a nebulous and frenzied rhapsody,—not seeing how much safer their footing would be, in the plain way of faith and holiness,—a way purposely made so plain, of God, that “wayfaring men, though fools, should not err therein.”

Now, preferences of this kind, it is obvious, unless

kept under very chastened and severe restraint, cannot fail to have most injurious effects,—upon the preacher, upon his hearers, and upon the truth of God. They are likely to be very hurtful to the preacher himself. They have a narrowing effect upon his own mind ; impair his faculties of judgment and discrimination ; tend to limit his reading, his intercourse, and, very often, his charities also, to men of his own school of thought ; and, worst effect of all, they may lose to him the benefit of that personal comfort and enjoyment of the Scriptures, which seem promised to those only who esteem all its sacred contents alike. “For *whatsoever* things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”<sup>6</sup>

Nor less hurtful are these topical partialities to the *people*. No doubt there are some persons, in every congregation, who like one-sided preaching ;—particularly if the one side be their own side. For it humours their prejudices ; gives no trouble to their conscience ; ministers to their vanity and self-conceit, as able to understand so well, wherein the essence of all true preaching consists. Yet are these the very people, to whom such preaching does the most harm. For we ought not to desire their complacent agreements with us. Such things only send them to sleep. It were better that they should hear something with which they

<sup>6</sup> Rom. xv. 4.



*disagree*;—something which should make them feel ill at ease;—presentments of truth, which, instead of sending them on their way rejoicing, to think how much they *know*, should send them to their homes sorrowful, to feel how little they *practise*. But though there may be some hearers who favour this narrow range of topic,—whose faculties are sharpened the instant a text is announced from the Apocalypse; or who “prick up their predestinating ears” when they think they are going to have a sermon to the elect, yet not of all, in our congregations, can it be said, “the people love to have it so.” Others there are who know their teacher’s idiosyncrasy, and have become weary of it. Every Sunday they watch for the time, when he shall get into his accustomed groove; and forthwith they resign themselves—to sleep, to unprofitable thoughts, to any expedient they can think of, to fill up lost time, and to compensate them for a lost opportunity of good.

Most of all, however, is this partial preaching injurious and dishonouring to the truth of God. It destroys its perfectness. It causes it to be shorn of its finely-balanced symmetry and proportions. It robs it of its beautiful adaptation to all the varieties of human thought, and all the exigences of the human condition. It turns the preacher of truth into the advocate for a dogma, and employs in the service of speculations, and fancies, and party-narrownesses, the agency ordained of God as a means to enlighten and bless mankind.

III. But to preach the Word in its integrity is not all that is required of us. We must enforce the several parts of which it is composed in their *rightful order of precedence*, — neglecting nothing, and keeping back nothing, but, at the same time, giving to *first truths*, a *first place*.

It would be a manifest misreading of the injunction to “declare the whole counsel of God,” to suppose it to mean, that no one truth of our revealed system was to have greater prominence, given to it, than another; and, therefore, that it was our duty to press, with a routine and uniform frequency, each separate doctrine of our Christianity. In giving his counsels to Timothy, how to show himself “approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,” the Apostle, it will be remembered, uses the remarkable expression, “rightly dividing the word of truth;” an expression which, on any interpretation, but, especially on the commonly assumed reference to the action of the priest under the law, in cutting up and appropriating the several parts of the sacrifice,<sup>7</sup> would plainly imply that the different parts of our revealed system were to be disposed, and presented in a certain related order of importance,—in other words, that there are “great things” in God’s law, which would require to be enforced upon the awakened conscience with peculiar urgency, lest they should be

<sup>7</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 15. See Whitby and Hammond in loc.

“counted a strange thing.”<sup>8</sup> And, in this view, we cannot fail to see that there are some gospel verities, which must be kept before the minds of our congregations always,—held up, not merely in the light of capital and distinguishing doctrines, but as great axioms of faith, lying at the very foundation of our Christianity, and giving to all its parts their coherency, and strength, and life.

Thus, of such fundamental truths, all would probably agree to regard as one, that central fact and mystery of our redemption, the offering of Christ upon the Cross, as the “full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” We must resist all attempts to get eliminated from our theology, either the word *propitiation*, or the infinite fact, which it so unambiguously expresses. As noticed already, among things vital to salvation, the Apostle determined to know nothing “save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” And, apart from this, or irreconcilable with this, or of which this does not form an implicit and integral part, we must determine to know nothing. The doctrine of the Atonement is the sinner’s refuge; the Church’s hope; the believer’s rock; the glorified spirit’s new and never-ending song. See how God has guarded it, through all ages, through all dispensations, through all the successions and fluctuations of human history. It stands out as an ultimate fact of revealed

<sup>8</sup> Hos. viii. 12.

science, which has been at the basis of all economies, and has given form to the religious worship of all times. The blindness of Israel may have obscured it; the traditions of Christendom may have overlaid it; the very heathen, to this day, may distort and darken it, by the admixture of elements, borrowed from their own wild and fanciful theologies. But its normal type, of "the just suffering for the unjust," has continued ever,—a truth of God, which it was beyond the power of falsehood to obliterate, and which the vicissitudes of ages have never been able to destroy.

And, as to the work of Christ FOR us, so to the work of the Holy Spirit IN us, must we give a standing pre-eminence in our teaching. The work of the Third Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, on the human soul, whereby it is recovered from the dominion of sin, and renewed unto holiness, must be maintained, and constantly urged upon our people, as a reality; as a necessity; as a great fact of our religious philosophy; as the fixed, ordained, universal qualification of the redeemed spirit before it can enter heaven. The doctrine is not to be explained away by the admitted tendency, in the sacred writers, to express themselves in strong figurative language. It is not to be robbed of all its precision and definiteness, by the hazy and incongruous speculations of an evangelical platonism. But, as against all the things which men make to stand for this inward experience, or which, for the practical purposes

of their salvation, they are too ready to suppose will do as well,—such as the proprieties of a blameless life, the strict decorum of an outward godliness, the saving and self-sustaining grace of sacraments, or the charmed life assumed to belong to continuance in an apostolic church,—the truth is to be announced again and again, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.”<sup>9</sup>

But here a question will arise. When we speak of the pre-eminence due to these great foundation-doctrines of our Christianity, is it meant to say, that, in some definite and distinctly enunciated form, they must be set forth in every sermon? Or is it not competent to us, in preaching constantly to the same people, to single out, now and then, for illustration, some abstract duty of the Christian life;—without stopping, every time we do so, to enlarge upon the relation in which this duty stands to an infinite moral scheme; and without a special caution to our hearers, that, in view of their personal salvation, this duty must never be considered, apart from the merits of Christ, to justify, and the influences of His Holy Spirit to restore? This raises a point, which, as we all know, has been much mooted; and on which we should not deem it well to pronounce a judgment too absolutely. But the position has been advanced, and largely taken up, that “every sermon should, in some part of it, contain such a plain statement of the Gospel plan of salvation, that a casual

<sup>9</sup> Rom. viii. 9.

hearer, may, in that sermon, if he should never hear another, find an answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?"<sup>10</sup> Now we quite honour the intention of this recommendation, and, with the principle involved in it, coincide to a great extent. But not altogether. For we cannot vary, very much, our expressions for fundamental doctrines. And if we are to have a kind of theological digest, tacked on to every subject we are discussing,—parable, history, prophecy, no matter what—insomuch that,

"Whate'er the text, the sermon still must be  
A little body of divinity,"

the repetition, to the stated hearers, must soon become very wearying. And it does seem, as Archdeacon Sinclair observes, to be "a very prodigal compassion for the benefit of this one imaginary stranger, who is present for the first time, and also, upon this hypothesis, for the last, to sacrifice, for his sake, the instruction of the regular and actual congregation."<sup>11</sup>

While, therefore, a sermon ought never to be preached by us, in which, expressed or implied, reference is not made to the redeeming and sanctifying agencies of the

<sup>10</sup> See Oxenden's *Pastoral Office*, p. 106. A like expression is attributed to Legh Richmond, "Keep in mind that excellent rule, never to preach a single sermon, from which an unenlightened hearer might not learn the plan of salvation, even though he never afterwards heard another discourse." See *Essays on the Christian Ministry*, p. 53., 1853.

<sup>11</sup> *Charge to the Clergy of Middlesex*, 1855.



Gospel, yet surely, it cannot be necessary to bind ourselves to lay down, in set form, Sunday after Sunday, which be "the first principles of the oracles of God." The formal and definite announcement of the method of a sinner's justification and acceptance, twice or thrice a week, by the same preacher, to the same people, must become, either a very irksome repetition of the same thing; or, in the endeavour to vary it, must demand a strain upon the inventive faculties, which very few minds could bear. And although, on a point so vital, as to be the Divinely appointed theme of the Christian ministry, every preacher would desire to err rather on the side of frequency, yet, with his customary hearers, it is certain, that the stereotyped formula would soon come to lose its effect; whilst, to the casual and unenlightened stranger, it may be doubted, if it would do any good. Hence, for the preaching of a full Gospel, as something it appears to us, must be left to the power of a continuous ministry to expound the way of God more perfectly; and something also to that underlying recognition of great principles, which every intelligent and candid mind will perceive, is as necessarily assumed in the particular phase of Christian life we are exhibiting, as the existence of root in a tree, is assumed, when we are speaking of the fruit it bears.

And it is in this implicit and pervasive reference to the spiritual doctrines of our Christianity, quite as much as in their formal and dogmatic announcement,

that, as we humbly conceive, consists the true carrying out of the apostolic rule of knowing nothing among our people "save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." We know it is customary to say that a faithful evangelical message may be expressed in one word,—it is PREACHING CHRIST. But, surely, it is not preaching Christ, merely to repeat the word every two or three minutes in a sermon. It is not preaching Christ, to be always labouring after some prismatic variety of the expression "Neither is there salvation in any other." It is not preaching Christ, to be looking out for allusions to Him, in the baldest facts; and subtle references to Him, in the most common expressions; straining after unnatural interpretations of Scripture language, almost as an excuse for bringing in the sacred Name. But it is preaching Christ, when, in the awful mystery of His twofold nature, He is set forth, as a living Saviour to living men. It is preaching Christ, when "the way" is exhibited with "the truth," and the truth is made to reflect light on "the life." It is preaching Christ, when we preach the duties which He commanded; the cross of self-denial which He bore; the holiness which He practised; the elevating power of sympathy, such as His was, with a brother's needs, the peace and blessedness of resignation, such as His was, to a heavenly Father's will. It is preaching Christ, when we preach the mildness of His yoke, the sweetness of His promises, the comfort of His near presence, the sufficiency

of His grace to cheer, and support, and guide. It is preaching Christ, when we preach an interest in Him as our hope; union to Him as our life; the prevalence of His intercessions, as the strong confidence of our prayers; and the mention of His righteousness only, as the ground of our acquittal before the throne of God. It is preaching Christ, when we preach Him as the peace of the heart, as the repose of the spirit, as the refuge of the fearful conscience, as the one all-filling, all-satisfying Object, upon which the thoughts of man could be exercised, or towards which the affections of man could be turned. In a word, it is preaching Christ, when, in His person, His work, or His offices, He is permitted to be “the diamond to shine in the bosom of all our sermons;”<sup>12</sup> when, named or unnamed, seen or unseen, He is made to shed a glorious sun-light over our entire field of subject; when views of what He is to us, and what He does for us, are so in-wrought with the web and woof of every discourse, that like the name of Phidias in the shield, to get out every trace of reference to Him, the entire work must be destroyed.

IV. We advance to another requirement. The Word, which is to furnish the subject-matter of our preaching, must be set forth with due regard to *the complementary or correlative* character of its several parts; that is, in all its careful and well-considered adjustments of faith and

<sup>12</sup> Bp. Wilkins.

duty, promise and precept, privilege and responsibility. In the exhibition of these nicely balanced parts of our revealed system, we are to go as close to the extreme on either side, as Scripture goes; and that, in utter fearlessness of any clash,—either with popular prejudice, or theological systems, or even with what some may think to be due to the demands of a rational philosophy.

Take, as an example of possible failure in this respect, the mode in which we may exhibit the doctrine of the Divine predestinations. Here is a doctrine, which is plainly declared in Scripture; which pervades the language of our Liturgy; which is sustained, and even demanded by any view which we could take of the nature or necessities of moral government. Reason is as loud as Revelation, in challenging assent to that truth, “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.”<sup>13</sup> The denial of it would go to depose God from the sovereignty of the spiritual world altogether; would bisect eternal duration into two parts, of which He should have the rule only of the former half; would leave the sceptre of universal empire to be tossed, as a prey, to a thousand wild contingencies, and make room for the possibility, that to-morrow’s sun might bring with it an entire reversal and discomfiture of the plans of an Eternal Mind. Nor is it mere foreknowledge only, which Revelation teaches. It is distinctly laid down that our salvation, in all the steps and parts of it,—in the call we receive, in the obe-

<sup>13</sup> Acts xv. 18.

dience we yield, in the justification we partake of, in the sense of adoption we enjoy, in the new moral image that is impressed, in the power to walk religiously in this life, and in the grace of perseverance, till we attain to the happiness of the life to come,<sup>14</sup>—is referable to an everlasting purpose; to the self-originated counsels of heaven; to the secret and eternal love of God.

And yet, while we should all agree that a doctrine, so completely interwoven with the whole scheme of revelation, must be one, which it would be a dangerous and culpable reticence to keep back, may it not be so presented as to wear a hard, austere, and even repulsive form,—perilous, not only to those sentiments of reverence, with which we should ever think of the Divine Being, but also to that sense of responsibility, which, as a law to the conscience of all moral agents, it could never be a wise thing to disturb. Often, no doubt, we do this unwittingly. Particular words have crept into our terminology, upon such subjects, which are not Scriptural, and which, from their *human* associations, at all events, are not desirable, and not safe. We mean nothing wrong when we speak of the Divine *decrees*, but the place of the word “decree,” in the vocabulary of an earthly legislator, gives to the term a peculiar harshness; and suggests an idea, which, as applied to the actions of a responsible being, is not true.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See Articles of Church of England, Art. xvii.

<sup>15</sup> The “vindictive justice” of God also is an expression found in

But particular aspects of this truth also may be exhibited in unwise excess. Thus in speaking of the *Sovereignty* of the Divine elections,—is it well, with a view to exalt the will of God to the highest point of absoluteness and supremacy, to speak of Him, as if He were wholly uninfluenced by moral considerations in what He does? to make it appear, as if He acted arbitrarily, without a reason, without a law, without regard to those eternal principles of wisdom and goodness, perfect conformity to which is a very necessity of His being? We are not supposing, that in these accounts of the method of the Divine procedure, there is anything illogical, or anything untrue, but only that the truth is viewed too exclusively from its *one* side. We are left to see, in the representations, too much of the Monarch, not enough of the Father; too much of God's *right* to order all things, not enough of the *rule* by which He orders them, or the gracious ends which they are ordered for; too much of the “consuming fire,” of God, not enough of the soft shining of the “rainbow,” which was seen round about His throne. Difficulties will remain, on any supposition. That we should see how things pertaining to God are arranged, or perceive, at once, the reconciling element of the Divine administration, in matters so occult and secret, cannot

some writers,—a phrase utterly unwarranted by Scripture, and, to a devoutly sensitive mind, most painful.



be necessary to our religious happiness; and in all probability is not possible to us, under our present limitations of religious thought. It should be enough to know, that the connection between the absolute freeness of Divine grace, and the known responsibility of man, in the acceptance or rejection of the truth as it is in Jesus, is a great fact of our religious philosophy, which, explained or unexplained, no reasoning will ever be able to disturb. For the rest, may we not ask, is any prerogative of the human intelligence compromised by our being obliged to say, while looking through a glass, darkly, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"<sup>16</sup>

And so, when considering the aspect of this doctrine towards man's moral liberty and accountableness, can it be right to charge ourselves with such a jealousy for the predestinating purposes of heaven, as to say that we have no ministry but to the elect? Why are we to feel less free, and open, and unembarrassed, in urging the overtures of the Gospel upon all before us, because, among them, may be some, with whom, it is not in God's hidden purposes, that these overtures should take effect? Admitting that, relatively to us, there may be something incongruous in addressing appeals to "fixed fate;" in trying to alter, by any earnestness of ours, the decisions of "foreknowledge absolute,"—yet is there no license of incongruity given

<sup>16</sup> Gen. xix. 25.

to us, to keep one of these elements out of sight, while we apply and enforce the other? Does not Scripture itself give countenance to, and even set us the example of such license? Thus, how little could Paul be thinking of Divine preordinations, when he described a servant of the Lord, as one, "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God *peradventure* will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth."<sup>17</sup> Nay, as if in condescension to any speculative difficulties we might have on such subjects, we have the Almighty Himself, in one place, suspending, upon a contingency, the issue of His preached word. For, commanding Jeremiah to write all these words in a book, that they may be read to the people, He is pleased to give as a reason, "It *may be* that the house of Judah will hear all the evil, which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity, and their sin."<sup>18</sup>

And a like cautiousness seems to be demanded of us in relation to the doctrine contained in our tenth Article, and the difficulty of determining, with philosophical precision, the methods of Divine grace, in concurrence with the free agency of man. We must claim a latitude of seeming incongruity,—not more than the inspired writers take, but, at the same time, not less,—enabling us to say, with all confidence, that of

<sup>17</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 25.

<sup>18</sup> Jer. xxxvi. 3.

ourselves we can do nothing, and yet disallowing, as a lawful corollary from this, the proposition, that we have nothing to do. Our danger here, as in the last example, comes of a too exclusive dwelling on one side of a truth,—isolating it from that which, though another truth to us, is not another; but only the complement of the first,—both together making one truth in the sight of God.

Still, to the finite mind, there is an acknowledged difficulty in looking at these two sides of a truth together. Unless we have recourse to that bad way of reconciling two doctrines, or two parts of a doctrine, which consists in ignoring or annulling one of them, it seems hardly possible, but that, in our double applications, we must lay ourselves open to the charge of making apparently incompatible assumptions. Some may complain of this; but it is a necessity of our limited powers of thought. “An intellect to which nothing should be paradoxical,” says Bishop Horsley, “would be infinite.” And, therefore, while we magnify, as we must magnify, the fullness and freeness of Divine grace; and while we accord, as we must accord, the honour, the glory, the infinite good of conversion to God and His Spirit only, we must be careful to let the other side of the truth be seen also;—setting forth man’s proper responsibility in the use of means, and shewing that there is some relation between man’s unrestricted agency, and the free grace of God, which

though not always clear as a fact to the understanding, ought to operate as a motive upon the heart.

So also in speaking of the original inability of man to do anything towards his own conversion,—we ought to go as far as Scripture goes in stating this, but there is no reason why we should go further; why, in order to heighten the degree of our nature's impotence in relation to any good thing, we should speak of this impotence as something physical or mechanical,—like that of the lame to walk, or the blind to see. Man's inability in regard to his salvation, according to Scripture, is moral, and moral only. It is not the want of *power* which keeps him back from Christ, so much as the want of *will*. “Ye WILL not come unto me that ye might have life.”<sup>19</sup>

At all events, on these subjects, we can only argue from certain ultimate facts of revelation. And, of such facts, none can be plainer than these two—that there must be an influence, from above, upon man's mind, to induce him to choose the service of God; and yet that, in yielding to and obeying this influence, man acts with the full accordance of his intellectual and moral powers. The influence is of God. The act is his own. The Holy Spirit works, but it is by giving us the willingness and the moral energy to work. It may be difficult to harmonise these propositions, at every point, but not more difficult than it is to prove that they actually con-

<sup>19</sup> John v. 40.

flict. They are two independent moral truths, not clashing, because, like two parallel lines, they never meet. It is the unchanging dictate of human consciousness that man is free to "refuse the evil." But it is the voice of inspiration ever, that, by grace alone, is he induced to "choose the good." And with this, though a confessedly imperfect comprehension of the Divine philosophy, we must open our mouth boldly. So far from hiding either one phase of the truth or the other, it were better that, after the example of the Apostle, we should sometimes let them meet face to face, challenging the pride of man to gainsay either of them, if he can:—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."<sup>20</sup>

There is one other subject, upon which, it is certain that the sacred writers assume a license to use apparently incongruous language, and in relation to which, if we would preserve the symmetry of our revealed system, we must not be afraid to follow their steps. We allude to the place which *good works* ought to occupy, in the scheme of a sinner's justification; and the extent to which we ought to enforce moral obedience upon the conscience, as indispensable to salvation. Very strong is the temptation to timidity and reserve, in this department of our teaching. For, not only have we to encounter the original and inherent difficulties, belonging

<sup>20</sup> Phil. ii. 12.

to the subject itself; not only, in our dogmatic enunciations, are we in danger of coming in contact with the sharp edges and angles of our Reformed Theology; but, it is next to certain, that, in insisting upon works of *any* kind, we shall offend the prejudices of many, who have a great disrelish for practical preaching; and who would rather hear ten sermons on points of *doctrine*, than one on the *duties* of the Christian life. We cannot doubt that there is too little love, in our day, for the theology of action, of self-denial, of stern, hard conflict with the rebellious and self-pleasing will. We love to think of the faith that *justifies the person*, but not enough of the faith that *purifies the heart*. We love to dwell on Christ, as a "sacrifice for sin;" we think less of Him in His mission as "an ensample of godly life." We love to take up His own beautiful sermon, and dwell on the words, Blessed, Blessed, Blessed, but do not pause enough to consider how all these promises belong to moral character,—to the penitent, to the meek, to the merciful, to the peace-makers, to the pure in heart.

Now, at all hazards, we must address ourselves to the combating of this tendency of the popular mind;—must be prepared to shew that, without any derogation from the perfectness of the Redeemer's sacrifice; without leaving room for the very thought, on our part, of any meritorious service; nay, with a holding by the received tenet of justification, tenacious as that of any martyr,



who ever sealed it with his blood,—we yet maintain the practice of good works, and the virtues of a holy life, to be vital to a man's hopes of heaven. "We must drive on with the Ten Commandments," said Luther, foreseeing how easily the great doctrine he had contended for, might become wrested to the purposes of Antinomian laxness. The tendency had begun to shew itself, in his day, to regard the moral law as part of a lapsed system,—to overlook its uses, to disparage its authority, to forget its ends. And the tendency has continued until now. And, for the correction of it, we must omit no opportunity of vindicating for the law, its high Divinity ; of urging its imperishable obligation upon the human conscience ; enforcing compliance with its precepts as the necessary evidence of a justified state ; and shewing that, by how much we are freed from its yoke, as a condition of our forgiveness ; by so much, must we stand in awe of its authority, as our rule of life.

All this will be likely to procure for us the reputation of being "*legal*" preachers, or "*moral*" preachers, or of being untrustworthy and obscure upon the great "article of a standing or falling church." But the danger must be incurred. Nay more, we may almost suspect the soundness of our own teaching, if it be not. No one was more strenuous in upholding the doctrines of grace than the late Mr. Simeon. But, at one of his evening gatherings at the University, he thus addressed the students :—"Now, you are going out as

ministers of the Gospel. Let me give you one very significant and emphatic caution. If you do not earn, every one of you, in his own sphere, the charge of *legal preaching*, depend upon it you are not doing the work of Christ, nor preaching His Gospel. The fact is, that people's heads are now so running after what they call *privileges*, that nine out of every ten will hardly hear of anything else."<sup>21</sup>

Justification by faith, then, is to be preached; but not out of its place, not out of its proportion, not in separation and divorce from the great whole of Divine truth. We are not to lay out all our strength in enforcing one aspect of a doctrine, on the ground that the other is assumed; or that the other is understood; or that, in practice, the other is sure to follow. If we would keep close to the highest examples, we must state and enforce both. "This is a faithful saying," says that Apostle whom we regard as pre-eminently the preacher of justifying faith, "and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which believe in God might be careful to maintain good works."<sup>22</sup> And why was Titus commanded to exhort the people thus? But because unless they *were* "careful to maintain good works," they could have no evidence that they truly "believed in God." And our teaching of justification must

<sup>21</sup> Communicated by a friend who was present, and who carefully noted the words.

<sup>22</sup> Tit. iii. 8.

be framed upon this model. Plainly, fearlessly, without the sheltering reserve of any limiting or ambiguous words, we must enforce the observance of moral duties, as being, in the case of all who are able to perform them, necessary to salvation.<sup>23</sup> True, we cannot perform such works without the aids of Divine grace,—without the agency of that Holy Spirit, which is the source, in us, of all that is acceptable, or good, or pure. But herein consists the special beauty of the Gospel system; that those very conformities to the Divine will, which it is the object of all evangelical religion to enforce, it is also the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit to work in us, and produce. The things are commensurate, each to each;—are often set down, in Scripture, as correlatives one of the other. Regarded merely as a precept, that must have seemed a hard saying of Ezekiel, to the house of Israel, “Make you a new heart and a new spirit.”<sup>24</sup> But how easy did it appear, when read

<sup>23</sup> An authority, not likely to sit loosely to the great principles of the Reformation, thus delivered himself before the members of a Scottish University. “There is a sound sense in which the whole strain of Scripture, and the amount of the principles of Calvinism warrant us to say, that good works are essential to salvation; for none can be saved who have not that character, which is produced by the Spirit of God, in all that are justified, and none have that character, in whom these unequivocal fruits of it do not appear.” Professor Hill’s *Lectures in Divinity*. Vol. iii., p. 230.

<sup>24</sup> Ezek. xviii. 31.

in the light of the corresponding promise, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."<sup>25</sup> On those who cannot watch with Christ for "one hour," it might seem useless to enforce the duty of "continuing instant in prayer,"<sup>26</sup> but the same Apostle who inculcates the duty, assures us of a Spirit that shall "help our infirmities."<sup>27</sup> Thus, precept and promise, duty and succour, requirements impossible to our nature's helplessness, and provided means for taking that helplessness away,—always go together. In urging to the performance of commanded duties, we can pursue the speculative objector to the farthest shelter he could fly to, and confound him with that one text, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

At all events, the moral requisitions of Scripture, in regard to outward conduct, must be enforced,—enforced, too, not as comely and congruous to our Christian profession only, but as necessary, as vital, as a constituent element of all saving faith. We may offend; may appear inconsistent; may be told that we contradict Apostles, and contradict ourselves. But we must not put asunder things which God hath joined together; must not weaken that indissoluble bond which unites the faith of justification, with the sanctities of life; must not hold up in solitary grandeur that motto on the seal of the believer, "Without faith it is

<sup>25</sup> Ezek. xi. 19.<sup>26</sup> Rom. xii. 12.<sup>27</sup> Rom. vii. 26.

impossible to please God,"<sup>28</sup> but omit to exhibit that solemn warning, inscribed on its other side, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."<sup>29</sup>

Of course, in what we have said of the duty of a manly disregard of the imputation of inconsistency, in exhibiting this, or any other of our great doctrines, in their diversely-related aspects, no justification is offered for our being more paradoxical in our statements than we can help ; or for putting ourselves more at apparent issue, than we can help, either with our received theological systems, or with the conclusions of a sound intellectual philosophy. We may not disparage either of these. To schemes, and systems of divinity, we are indebted for some of the wisest and most effective safeguards of our Christianity ; whilst the flippant taunt, sometimes thrown out against religious metaphysics, as the dreamy employment of men, who are always confounding themselves by their own subtleties, or losing themselves in the mist of their own doubts, is, to say the least of it, neither logical, nor safe, nor wise. Our claim is merely for a licensed breadth and freedom, in the applications of Christian doctrine, which shall only be not *contradictory*, and not *impossible*. From things hard to be understood, we ask no dispensation, —none from paradox. But we *do* ask, in these applications, to go further into the domain of Divine philosophy, than it would be possible, with full comprehen-

<sup>28</sup> Heb.xi. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Heb. xii. 14.

sion of the objects presented, either for human systems, or abstract speculation to adventure ; *do* ask, while presenting the facts of revelation to the practical acceptance of mankind, to be allowed to shade over their aspects to the purposes and plans of God ; *do* demand the right to enforce, in practice, obligations, which, in theory, we might find it hard to explain ; and to exhibit separate segments of the circle of revealed truth, without holding ourselves bound to explain, at all times, how they combine and form into a perfect whole. All this we claim, as being a necessity, forced upon us by the limitations of our intellectual nature. "A God that could be comprehended, would not be God," says an ancient Father. If a revelation could be comprehended, would it be thought Divine ?

V. Our last rule, in order to the securing for our sermons the most comprehensive range of subject, is, that the word which we have to preach must be presented in all its wide and universal adaptation to popular sympathies ;—to the carnal, as well as to the spiritual ;—to the great human heart,—affected most readily by the external, and the exciting, and the things of the passing hour ; and to the calm Christian heart,—satisfied from the deep springs of its own spiritual being, and beating with the warm pulse of the life of God.

Thus we think it worth consideration, whether the



basis of our preaching sympathies is laid quite broadly enough ; whether we interweave, into our discourses, enough of the secular, mundane, common-life element ; pressing, into our service, the stirring incidents of the day ; and, by a discreet glancing at topics, foremost in all companies, and loudest on every tongue, trying to get the ear of the times.

The real difficulty of our work, as before noted, is to gain a kindly hearing for old and familiar truth ; to press upon sluggish minds the applications of principles, in which they have been instructed from childhood. Illustrations of these principles, in our own proper line, our people have heard again and again ; have assented to them as often ; and have gone to sleep upon them, as often. But let us connect these admitted conclusions of Gospel practice, with some newly appearing phase or fact of social life ; let us shew their bearing upon events, which all the world is talking about : and the startled ear will be roused, as if it were listening to some new truth, and even a wakeful attention may be gained, for the rest of the discourse. The late gifted Mr. Irving, in the height of his popularity, and before his theology had run off into any of its eccentric and erroneous forms, was a great master in these adaptations. Without laying himself open to the charge of a narrow partizanship, he yet found means, for bringing into his discourses, on the Sunday, the uppermost and freshest topics of public thought ; struck in with trains of senti-

ment and emotion, on which he knew the minds of his hearers had been exercised all the week ;—all this, of course, that he might lead them up to some higher elevation, whence they might take a wider survey of the operations of a moral providence, and see the suberviency of all things to the spiritual designs of God.

Let us not be misunderstood here. We are no advocates for what is called “political preaching:”—for the introduction, into the pulpit, of those vexed questions of social or secular philosophy, on which it is scarcely possible to speak without taking a side ; and yet, in which, if we *do* take a side, we are almost sure to offend. Against such a practice, we cannot protest too strongly. It is doubly unfair :—unfair to the ministry of the Church, which we have no right to commit to any pronounced decision upon such subjects ; and unfair to the congregation, who may hear their own opinions condemned in a place, where they have no opportunity to reply. We never listen to such sermons, without feeling disposed, with the town-clerk at Ephesus, to claim the right of “impleading,” and requiring that the matters at issue, “be determined in a lawful assembly.”<sup>30</sup>

But surely, beyond this frontier line of debated politics, there is a large domain of worldly territory, which we may occupy and improve for God ;—such as subjects of economic science, or the achievements of inventive art, or shifting phases of the national

<sup>30</sup> Acts xix. 38.

mind, or events of mark and emphasis in our commercial history, or openings for intercourse with foreign nations, or changes in thrones, dynasties, constitutions, governments,—all these having a bearing on the great interests of human progress and being part of that great providential lesson-book, out of which, as well as out of the Bible itself, it is a part of the preacher's office to instruct mankind. God teaches by events; and it should be ours to point the moral of the tale. Why should we hesitate to speak of the perils of rash venture, when the panic makes our merchant-princes tremble? or to explain to the leaders of the combination and the strike, how bootless it is to set themselves against the laws of heaven? or to enforce the lessons of righteousness, when the nation's heart is aching with the last tidings from the seat of war? or to place, in a more kindly and trustful aspect, the philosophy of the Divine purposes, whenever the wasting rains, and almost sunless summer, may give us fear for "the appointed weeks of harvest?" Surely, in treating of such subjects, we may find sea-room enough, without any hazard of making shipwreck of our Gospel charities, and without fear of being drawn into the quicksands of political or party strife.

It will be observed, however, that, in relation to these allusions to passing events, we are merely claiming a license; and that license only for those, who may be conscious of possessing judgment enough to use it well. If not

carried out wisely, the attempt is better not made at all. The weapon is not one for an unskilled workman; and, in injudicious hands, would be almost sure to betray a man into the worst faults,—faults of taste, if not of something worse. But let there be wise and discriminating moderation. Let us never divest ourselves of the mantle of religious teachers. Let us never touch upon worldly subjects but to exalt, and sanctify, and set upon them the seal of eternity, and our references to men's fireside topics will neither be unprofitable, nor seem out of place. The world will sometimes ply us with its own questions so directly, that we feel we *must* speak. And then we must demand to look at its tribute-money,—to read the inscription, and see whose is the image it bears. But, into no pitiful display of narrow or sectarian bias, shall we be betrayed thereby. The occasion shall only serve for enforcing a lesson of eternal truth,—a law of practical discrimination for the guidance of all time:—"Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's."<sup>31</sup>

But we are to be made "all things to all men." A steward of the mysteries of faith, must provide for the whole household. If he dispense milk for "the babes," he must prepare "strong meat for them that are of full

<sup>31</sup> On the introduction of these occasional topics into our discourses, some excellent remarks will be found in the preface to "The Lost Chief and the Mourning People; a sermon by J. H. Gurney."

age." If, in order to hold up the Gospel, in all the largeness, and breadth, and perfect humanness of its sympathies, he discourses of things of the *outer* world; he must, not the less, but the more, exhibit that Gospel, in its relations to its own *proper* world,—the world of faith, the actings of godliness, "the life of God in the soul of man."

Our remarks here, it will be seen, point to the necessity of what is called *experimental* preaching; or the Gospel of Christ laid open, in its more spiritual and subjective aspects;—shewing the relation of dogma to feeling, and the direct action of a doctrinal system on the sympathies and experiences of the heart. By some persons, it is well known, strong exceptions are taken to this kind of preaching. They would have the Gospel presented under its *objective* aspects almost entirely; as a scheme of facts to be understood, or doctrines to be learned, or ritual service to comply with, or precepts to keep and perform. Revelation, it is argued, is God's remedy for a sick and suffering world. And, applied faithfully, it is a sufficient and certain remedy. What purpose is served by these morbid introspections of the soul's anatomy? Or why should we make ourselves anxious about the diagnosis, if we are in the hands of a Physician, who is quite able to remove the disease?

On this alleged opposition between two modes of teaching, we have only to repeat a remark, already

made in another case of apparent contraries, that there is, or ought to be, between them, no opposition at all; that the one is but the complement or correlative of the other; and that there is danger only, and discrepancy of teaching only, and distortion of truth only, when either, into the one scale or the other, there is thrown an unfair and preponderating weight. As to this question of "objective" or "subjective" teaching, why, the very terms used, suppose the existence of each other, as well as a reciprocal adaptation to each other. What would be the use of "objective" revealed truth, without a subject-mind to reveal it to? Or what were an "objective" revealed remedy, without a receptive subject, at once conscious of a disease, and capable of making use of the provided cure? Moreover, it is in the several stages of this awakened consciousness of our need of a remedy, and in the degrees of practical urgency with which we are led to lay hold on the Gospel, as the only remedy for our need, that Scripture bids us look for proof, that its reliefs have been savingly applied. We do not preach effects, without preaching a cause. But if the cause be adequate, we expect the effects to follow. Now, "the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."<sup>82</sup> And, therefore, we are to look for these

<sup>82</sup> Heb. iv. 12,



effects. The eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans is full of these subjective tests,—plain marks of the Holy Spirit's work in the heart, by which each one should try for himself, whether he be in the faith or not. No mere *objective* preaching will enable a man to do this. It scatters the seed only, without taking any note where it falls. It may be on the beaten track; it may be on the thinly-coated rock; it may be among choking thorns,—the subjective aspect of the parable, being entirely overlooked, though teaching, as this does, that fruit will only come up, when the seed has been “received into an honest and good heart.”

Admitting, however, the importance of bringing, much and prominently, into our sermons, the emotions and processes of the Christian's inner life, the question will present itself, whence is a knowledge of such experiences to be obtained? From Holy Scripture, in some degree, no doubt. The large admixture of the narrative and biographical element, in the inspired writings, might seem almost to have been designed for this end. And in epistles, and histories, and holy psalms, the Christian beholds the reflected workings of the renewed mind, as plainly “as face answereth to face in a glass.” From pastoral intercourse, also, we may learn much; from the different phases of spiritual feeling and emotion, which are brought before us, whether in the chamber of sickness, or in the house of mourning, or in the trials of those who are passing

through a long night of mental sadness. Each of these phases may be taken as a type. They represent a stage or condition of the religious sensibilities, through which many will be passing, while we speak; and who, in the life-like and truthful touches of our picture, will recognise the phenomena of their own mental condition.

But there is one source of truth and power, in drawing these portraiture of the inner life, for the want of which no extent of pastoral observation, nor even any theoretical acquaintance with Holy Scripture, can compensate. We mean that which is self-supplied; which wells up from the deep springs of the man's own spirit; which makes it sure that the portrait shall be natural, because we have gone, for the original, to the diversities of our own inner life, and to the teachings of our own heart. Experimental preaching is the preaching of soul to soul; and one might almost as soon expect an electric spark to be elicited from an uncharged battery, as for the preaching of experimental truth to profit, where the experience is all on one side. No; such preaching is not for the unconverted man. Simulate it he may; and to a certain extent, successfully. He may borrow largely from the quaintnesses of puritan theology; or incorporate, into his discourses, the "high nonsense" of German spiritualism; or turn, into bad prose, the most spiritual parts of the poetry of the "Christian Year"—careful to intermingle, with this pseudo-heart-painting,

certain hackneyed religious phrases ; or else, taking shelter from his own obscurities, in some equally hackneyed Scripture text. All this, we say, he may do. Nor is it for us to say that no blessing shall follow. It is not in ministerial deficiencies, happily, to “take away the effect of Christ’s ordinance.” And, with God, there is no restraint “to save by many or by few,”—by an Ezekiel, who receives all the words of the Lord into his heart,<sup>33</sup> or by a Balaam, who only takes them upon his lips.

On the other hand, let the filling up of the spiritual outline we have been drawing, be found in our own breast,—in our own contrition for sin, in our own bewailings of infirmity, in our own conflicts with the remainders of an evil nature, in our own too feeble aspirings after the sanctities of a higher life ; let us speak that we do know, and testify that we have felt, when we discourse of the misery of the veiled face of God ; of the discomfort of a blank morning’s prayer ; of the strength of conscious weakness ; of the peace and joy of the Saviour’s cross,—of looking to it, of glorying in it, of living very near to it,—and, we may be well assured, that a genial and grateful response will be awakened in a thousand Christ-touched hearts. “Never do I find my people so much edified and strengthened,” said the late Legh Richmond, “as when I speak from the inward feelings of my own heart.” And the expe-

<sup>33</sup> Ezek. ii. 10.

rience of most of us will confirm this. Under a fresh sorrow in our own families, how tenderly can we comfort? When a feared evil has just been averted from ourselves, how fervently can we exhort to trust? When we have had a time of near fellowship with God, in our own spirit, how, unconsciously to ourselves, does the face of the soul shine? Not that our own religious feelings, of any kind, are to be obtruded much upon our people's notice; for that would betray a thinking of self; a base pride, sheltering itself under the mask of humiliation; a subtle form of preaching our own attainments, our own conflicts, the extent to which we "bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus"—when we ought rather to be telling of the riches of His grace, and shewing that we glory only in His cross. We are to make use of our own experiences, and the more marked features of spiritual expression in our own character, only as they help to bring out new varieties of a many-sided life,—a life unseen, a life from heaven, a life "hid with Christ in God."

It may be thought, perhaps, that considering the relative paucity, in every congregation, of spiritually-minded persons, we ought, upon any principle of fairness in our distributions, to introduce the mention of these experimental topics, very sparingly. It may be said that, to a large majority of hearers, these discourses of spiritual pathology would be like preaching in an

unknown tongue ; and, in fact, that the thoughts of many hearts, after a sermon of this kind, would find their best expression in the remark, said to have been made by Pitt to Mr. Wilberforce, as they were returning from hearing a highly-spiritual discourse from Richard Cecil :—"I cannot understand what the man says." But in answer to this, it is to be remembered, that, in regard of different modes of presenting a faithful message, we none of us know "whether shall prosper, this or that." The instances of success, in individual cases, we are permitted to hear of, are found for the most part, to leave all our antecedent reckonings at fault ;—the advanced Christian being often brought on his way by an exhortation, which was never meant for him ; and the worldly man, being stirred up to serious thought, by discourses, for which we expected to find a response, chiefly, in the sympathies of an eclectic few. Even, in the case of the gifted statesman above mentioned, we are not sure whether a sermon on Christian experience, was not the very best, he could have listened to. Discourses of doctrine, or of practice, he could hear every Sunday. They were familiar to him as household words ; and would pass away as soon. 'But what,' he might naturally ask, as he witnessed the deep interest which this kind of spiritual preaching awakened, 'is the secret of converting the barren

dogmas of a creed into living things,—living facts of experience, living bonds of sympathy, living springs, to those who spiritually received them, of a common joy, and hope, and peace? What is this strange freemasonry of religious thought, by which one heart signs to so many other hearts? and this, by the aid of no mystic medium, but owing solely to their common understanding of a book, which is open to all mankind alike. In a word, what makes the Bible so different a book to others, to what it has ever been to me? “Thou bringest strange things to our ears: we would know, therefore what these things mean?”<sup>34</sup>

And it is, in this way, as we believe, that this higher tone of spiritual preaching is so often made beneficial to unconverted men. The same Scripture which is profitable to the godly man for his “instruction in righteousness,” is found profitable to the careless man for his “correction,” and “reproof.” A worldly person hears it declared, “the natural man understandeth not the things of the spirit of God?” “But why do I not understand them?” it will be natural for him to enquire. “The faculties of intelligence belong as much to me, as to others. Where shall I find a solution of this continuing mental darkness, if it be not in the rebellion of a stubborn and perverted will? “O God, search me and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts, and see if there

<sup>34</sup> Acts xvii. 20.



be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”<sup>35</sup>

At all events, the spiritual or æsthetic element of our religion is a real element; and, in its place and degree, must enter into every faithful ministry. True, great care must be used that, in our statements about it, there be no exaggeration, and no contradiction. It must be kept in subordination to all the practical aspects of the Christian life, that the door be not opened to a religion of mere emotion and excitement. It must be exhibited in harmony with our proper didactic teaching, that we seem not to favour the delusions of the mystic, and the recluse. And it must be enforced, in a way of concurrence with all man's thinking, and feeling, and active powers, in order that the requirement supposed in it may not appear an impossible thing,—namely that the affections be set on things above, while the mind that plans, and the hands that toil, are necessarily employed on things that are on the earth. These conditions observed, it seems hardly possible to err in excess, when enforcing a religion of the heart. For “with the HEART man believeth unto righteousness.” “Out of the HEART proceed the issues of life.” An exaggerated regard to the demands of an external system has been the distinguishing vice of all false or corrupted worship, and the homage of the affections is the first proof required from us of God, that

<sup>35</sup> Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

our worship is spiritual and true. "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly: neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Rom. ii. 28, 29.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE DELIVERY OF A SERMON.

Prejudice against elocution as an art—Opinion of Professor Blunt—The ordinance of preaching a testimony to the importance of good oral address—Effect of it on the Stage—Danger of mannerism—Cultivation of delivery among the ancients—Modern practice on the Continent and among Dissenters—The voice—Physical danger of overstraining it—The only qualification to speak audibly and pleasantly—Right pronunciation—Use of gesture—Practice of the ancients—Of Whitefield—Of Chalmers—Chief use of art to correct ungracefulness in action—Expression of the countenance—Necessity of earnestness—Baxter's lamentations—Trials of good men in relation to earnestness of delivery.

AMONG queries for the consideration of those who would turn their mind to subjects of social amelioration, the acute Bishop Berkeley once proposed the following:—"Whether half the learning and study of these kingdoms is not useless for want of a proper delivery and pronunciation being taught in our schools and colleges?"<sup>1</sup> It is to be feared the bishop would find

<sup>1</sup> Bp. Berkeley's *Querist*, No. 203.

no improvement among us, if he were living now. Indeed, in one respect, he would find us worse. *His* remark points chiefly to the *neglect* of an important branch of education. In the sense of an art, reducible to technical or scientific laws, and, in which, therefore, we should not be ashamed to have properly qualified persons to guide us, elocution, in our day, is commonly looked upon with contempt. Hear a recently-expressed dictum from one, whom the Lady Margaret would have been proud of as the occupant of her learned chair. "To repair to some professor of elocution, he often a stage player, for rules by which to govern the voice and attitude in the house of God, seems so likely to begin in foppery or to end in it, that I confess it would take a great deal of substantial merit in the man and the minister to divert my mind, at least, were I one of his flock, from the offensive associations such a proceeding would connect with him." <sup>2</sup>

A hard sentence this. Yet the true reflection of the University mind,—probably in some degree, of the whole clerical mind throughout the country. With very rare exceptions, our clergy take no lessons in elocution, and the reason why they do not, we believe, proceeds as much from shame as from anything else. Some excuse, no doubt, may be found in the fact that, in this country, at least, the profession has been left to be taken up by ill-qualified men,—by the stage-player, Blunt speaks

<sup>2</sup> Duties of a Parish Priest, Sect. v. p. 175.

of, or by the literary charlatan. But for all this, if there be any truth in the principles, about to be advocated in this chapter, it will be hard to escape from the conclusion, that to despise all scientific aids, in acquiring a correct delivery, is to throw scorn upon a great auxiliary to the truth, and virtually to make a boast of our self-sufficiency and conceit.

We have headed our chapter, "The Delivery of a Sermon," desiring to include, under that phrase, all those varieties in the look, tone, and outward manner of a preacher, by which he hopes to give more effective expression to his thoughts, and to move his auditory to more hearty sympathy with his theme. There is a right way of setting about this; and there are a thousand wrong ways. The question is, whether any rules can be laid down to direct him in his choice,—in other words, whether the power to affect his hearers, by his discourse, is at all dependent upon the right exercise of the bodily organs; and then, whether there is anything, in those organs, to except them from the general law of the human faculties, which supposes that they may be improved by cultivation.

First, then, does the power to enforce truth upon a hearer, depend upon the good or bad use, by the speaker, of his bodily organs? Is there an independent momentum, in a well expressed, and logically constructed discourse, which will have its proper effect upon the mind, though the speaker should take no heed

to his elocution at all? That is, though he should be declamatory, where he ought to be grave; or be interrogatory, when there is no question to be asked; though he should make "confusion worse confounded" of his emphases, and make a pause at every place but the right? This, of course, no one will contend for; and, therefore, we may safely begin at this point,—that there may be a BAD elocution,—bad for interesting a hearer; bad for producing any moral impression; bad even for common intelligibleness. Many of us, it is likely, have heard sermons delivered in this way; and as we sat, have felt almost impelled to imitate the example of the man, invited to a private reading, by Thomson, of his poem of the "Seasons,"—and who snatched the manuscript out of the surprised poet's hands, because he could bear the murdering of such beautiful thoughts no longer.

But, the possibility of a bad elocution granted, and even of ruining, thereby, the best discourse in the world, can we go a step further, and claim, for elocution, a *positive* quality of goodness of its own? That is, can we challenge attention to it, not only as capable of doing the amplest justice to prepared or written language, but also, as fitted to clothe the corresponding thought with a reality, and life, and power, which the written language of itself would never have been able to express? We think we may go thus far; and, in proof of it, feel that we have only to appeal to this



Divine ordinance of preaching itself. For why should the enforcement of truth and duty, upon the human conscience, be committed of God, to such a mode of conveyance at all? Why should the agency of oral teaching have been preferred, by Him, to visions of the night, or the ministry of angels, or the untouched and unexpanded letter of the written word,—heaven itself speaking to the ear in closets, in order that nothing of man,—nothing of the wind, or the earthquake, or the fire, might compete with the still small voice of God? Why, but that the Author of our being knew that there were latent sensibilities in the human soul, which would be kindled into life, by nothing so soon as by the power of the living voice; by the fascinations of eye, and tone, and countenance lighted up; attitude, look, feature, manner, each having a language of its own, and all speaking, in their own tongue, the wonderful works of God.

For the practical proof of this superiority of the oral, over the written language, we have only to go to the stage. “There,” observes Bishop Burnet, “such is the power of a good pronunciation, that though we know that all is a fable and fiction, the tender parts do so melt the company, that tears cannot be stopped even by those who laugh at themselves for it.”<sup>3</sup> The reason of all this is that the actor knows the power of his instrument, and adapts himself to its scientific laws. He

<sup>3</sup> Pastoral Care, ch. ix. p. 155, ed. 1840.

studies, not only the language of the author, but the language of *the body*. He knows that there are shades of sentiment and thought, too ethereal and delicate for the written symbol to pourtray. It is to the eye, "that most pure spirit of sense;" and to the marking accent, as it lingers upon his tongue; to the frame, eloquent of emotion, and to the poetry of the discoursing hand, that he looks to enable him to bring out the poet's finer frenzies. Roscius, with deformities of feature, which had to be concealed by means of a mask, could yet enchain a Roman audience with delight, by the expressive intonations, and overpowering sweetness of his voice; whilst, of Garrick, it is affirmed that, by a mere posture of the elbow, he could delineate a state of mind, which artificial language was too inflexible to express.

'But we have the utmost horror,' it will be said, 'either of being or appearing actors. We join, with all our hearts, in that sentiment of Cowper,

"In man or woman, but far most in man,  
And, most of all, in man that ministers  
At the altar, from my very soul, I loathe  
All affectation."

And we would rather retain our elocutionary awkwardnesses all our days, than dabble in the mysteries of a craft, which would tend to make, of an ambassador for Christ, a Garrick, or a Roscius.' Now, leaving Cowper

to himself, the rest of this argument, as it seems to us, would be rightly paralleled, by supposing a man to say, he would rather retain a bad or injurious habit of walking all his life, than be indebted, for its cure, to an art, which might tend to give to his gait the mincing step of a dancing-master. For, to whatever excess carried, the principles, whether of the actor or the dancing-master, are based upon the ascertained laws of our nature;—laws, which neither of these artists could transgress, without defeating his own object; nor, in the case of speaking, especially, without risk of lasting injury to the organ employed.

But must not a set and prepared regard to the manner of our delivery,—a resolution prepense that we will deliver this passage in one way, and that passage in another,—of necessity lead to a transparent artificialness, an offensive mannerism, a painful conviction, in the mind of the hearers, that there has been a closet rehearsal,—leaving them at no loss to discover, when the solemn pause is coming in, or when they are to expect

“The start theatric practised at the glass?”

No doubt there is a danger of this, if there have really been any such rehearsal; that is, if in applying the principles of the elocutionary art, we try them directly upon a sermon of our own, and especially upon one which we are just about to deliver. For then, it is

hardly possible, but that the miserable thought of self should be present, while we are preaching; and particular passages may recall the determination formed, in the private exercise, as to how this or that should be spoken. But there is no danger of this, if, as has been well recommended, in our private elocutionary studies, we recite with appropriate energy the work of some standard author.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, our recommendations, throughout, must be taken to proceed upon the suggestion already quoted from Bishop Berkeley,—namely, that the cultivation of a good oral address should *enter into the preacher's education*; that the principles of the art should have been mastered by him, before he has authority to enter a pulpit at all. In such a case, any particular rehearsal of his own sermons, in the strict elocutionary sense, will not be necessary. In the case of the written sermon, he will read it carefully; and, with a view to correct and impressive emphasis, he may find it an advantage to read it aloud. But, for any accessories of delivery beyond this, he may trust himself to the impulse of the moment. The *habit* of a good elocution once acquired, the application of its rules to one discourse or another, will come naturally. A good reader will deliver a passage of Milton effectively, though he had never read a line of it before. How

<sup>4</sup> Gresley's Eccl. Angl. Part IV., Let. xxxii., who quotes the practice of Demosthenes:—"Demosthenes, grande quoddam intuens speculum, componere actionem solebat." Quinctil. xi. 3.

much easier should it be for a preacher, who has accustomed himself in private to read aloud the compositions of others,—to deliver with animation, and propriety, and, without any studied recital beforehand, a discourse of his own preparing.

At all events, what the age demands of the preacher is this ; that he have such a practical acquaintance with all that constitutes good delivery, whether acquired by oral recitation in private, or by the aid of a competent instructor, as shall ensure for his hearers a fulfilment of these two conditions ;—first, that there be none of those distortions, croakings, jerkings, and screamings, by which the effect of a discourse is so much injured ; and, secondly, that there shall be so much of skilled adaptation of the bodily organs, as, harmonizing with the modesty of nature, and based upon her eternal laws, shall express right thoughts in a forcible and right way. It is needless to say how many preachers fall short of the first, and merely negative, requirement here spoken of. To many, who would boast that *they* never have recourse to “the start theatric before the glass,” we fear it might be said, ‘The greater the pity that you never should.’ For if some of your gestures and grimaces had been practised *there*, we feel sure they never would have been repeated anywhere else ; instead of being visited, as they now are, every week, upon your congregation,—patient under the infliction, and helpless in their disgust.

Other considerations might be urged vindicating the necessity of attention to a good delivery. Our neglect of it stands out in strange contrast, with our veneration for the models of classic antiquity,—with our endeavours to coerce our own intractable and uncouth language, into conformity with those graceful and flowing periods, which so much delight us, in the oratory of Greece and Rome. And yet what nations ever trusted to the unaided power of written language so little, or, on the requisitions for a good practical oratory, insisted so much? A bad speaker,—a man of croaking voice, or of spasmodic twitch and jerk, would not have been tolerated in the forum, however convincing his arguments, or however imposing the rhetorical finish of his style. Among the Romans, especially, the education of the orator was a life. It began at seven years of age. In wealthy families, a professor of rhetoric was kept in the house. At an early age, the youthful orator was expected to commit to memory the famous laws of the twelve tables; whilst, as Plutarch relates, in the life of the younger Cato, the very boys, intended for the forum, would get up mock trials, and go through all the forms of a judicial inquiry, by way of trying their young powers of oratory. And the best speakers continued practising declamation, as a mere artistic exercise, and solely with a view to self-improvement, long after they had entered upon public life. “Cicero, after his first great effort, put himself under foreign in-



structors, for the better management of his vocal organs. And, on his return, though he was engaged in many and different faculties," says his biographer, "he let no day slip without some performance in oratory, declaiming constantly with the best antagonists he could light on, among the students."<sup>5</sup> And like things are related of other great orators. The painstaking of Demosthenes has passed with us into a familiar school-word:—how he sought to correct a stammering utterance, by putting stones into his mouth; and to cure himself of shortness of breathing, by running rapidly up a hill; how he braced himself for the tumult of an Athenian assembly, by speaking against the wild roar of the sea, and studied carefully, before a mirror, how the arm should be waved, and in what folds the flowing robe would fall. We, perhaps, should incline to think that all this labour was thrown away. Æschines did not think so. In his banishment, we are told, he recited, on some public occasion, one of his rival's speeches. The auditory expressed themselves, in terms of highest rapture, at the performance. Upon which he said, "How much more would you have been affected if you had heard Demosthenes deliver it?"<sup>6</sup>

Neither is there any want of sanction to a cultivated

<sup>5</sup> See Kennett's *Essay on the Roman Education*, prefixed to his *Antiquities*, Essay II., p. xxv.

<sup>6</sup> Potter's *Short History of Grecian Literature*, Supplement to *Grecian Antiquities*.

elocution in modern practice, and that even in the department of theology. The importance attached to it by continental divines,—our greatest authorities upon preaching as *an art*, at all events,—is sufficiently evident from the prominent place it occupies in the writings of Cardinal Maury, and of Fénélon. In the Andover Theological Seminary, there is a chair founded for a Professor of Sacred Rhetoric, a part of whose office it is to deliver lectures on the culture of the voice, and all other accessories of an effective oratory. The same studious regard to the cultivation of the elocutionary art, is observed in the principal theological institutions for preparing men for the ministry, among the nonconformists in our own country.<sup>7</sup> So that, in a practical ignoring of all the adjuncts of effective oral address, and in the almost contemptuous denial, to elocution, of any right to be considered an art at all, we think it may be affirmed, that we, of the Church of England, stand almost alone.

Assuming, however, that we have made out our case thus far, and have proved that, like Sir Roger de Coverley's model chaplain, we ought to "endeavour after a handsome elocution," our next inquiry will turn upon the question, "what a handsome elocution is?" in other words, "what constitutes good delivery?" And

<sup>7</sup> See an account of the method pursued at the Baptist College, in Mr. Gurney's Consecration Sermon, p. 53.

here, as in the case of style, there will probably be the most perfect agreement among us, as to the *name* of what we desiderate, with the utmost possible diversity about the *thing*. Thus, the *name*, by which a good delivery should be described, we shall be all agreed upon. Eschewing all art, study, affectation, mannerism, the only thing we ask for, it will be said, is a *natural* delivery. But this brings us no nearer to the solution of our difficulty. For we ask *whose* natural, and which of *all* the naturals is it to be? It is natural, to one man, to be rapid in his utterance, to another to be very slow;—to one, to carry himself with a familiar, fire-side ease, to another, to be fettered and oppressed with dignity;—to one man, to keep to the same whining and funereal note, from the text to the doxology; to another, not to be able to get through a paragraph, without bringing in all the changes of the vocal gamut, from the deepest barytone, up to a scream; to one man, to maintain, throughout, the same statuesque and unmoved rigidity of features; to another, to keep all the facial muscles in a constant state of writhing and distortion, as if he expected his countenance to tell us his meaning, even if we could understand nothing else.

It will probably be answered, that these are instances of acquired *unnaturalisms*; or, at all events, examples of a natural tendency exaggerated and overdone. But then, it is in determining when nature *is* overdone,—in finding the proper medium,—in the case of utter-

ance, for instance, between the “bounding steed” and the “wounded snake;” or in the case of tone, between the pompous mouthing and the doleful whine,—that all the rules of a correct and chastened elocution are brought to bear. Thus naturalness, as applied to the delivery of a preacher, consists chiefly in the avoiding of that which is awkward, and unnatural; in a studied consideration of the way in which nature should, and would deliver herself, if she had none of the acquired peculiarities of home or school to contend with, or no original inaptitudes of her own to correct. If this is to make naturalness *an art*, the blame of the solecism must be with those who make it anything else; who seem to take it for granted that we have an intuitive faculty for perceiving all rhetorical proprieties at once; indeed, who argue, as if it were just as natural for a man to preach, as it is for a beaver to build, or a bird to fly. Individualities there may be, no doubt, peculiar to every public speaker. And these, if not too closely bordering on the awkward or the ludicrous, it will be helpful to a natural delivery to retain. We do not want either preachers or orators made to a pattern,—each man sacrificing, to some uniform artificial standard, all that is peculiar, or personal to himself. We could no more fix a standard of the graceful in oratorical manner, than we could fix a standard of the beautiful in the human countenance. In both cases, there may be the greatest possible diversity, between

one person and another, whilst each has a characteristic excellence of his own. That which we are especially contending for is, that, concurrently with these retained personalities, there should be a study of the best models, and a regard to scientific rules. Nature may always be herself, without despising art ; and she will only be the more herself, for studying art aright.

What, then, are those bodily organs, which, as pertaining to a good and natural delivery, it is important to a preacher that he should know how to manage ; and which a careful regard to rules will enable him more fully to develope ? Of these, the first and the principal, is the VOICE. Will any doubt the value of judicious guidance in the use of this ? Why, even in relation to its physical management, and the danger, both to usefulness and life, from the undue and unscientific tension of its powers, the study of elocution, *as an art*, is almost indispensable. We alluded to Cicero, just now. At the age of seven-and-twenty, he had, owing to the vehemence of his oratory, and great constitutional weakness, so injured his voice, that he was strongly advised, by his physicians and nearest friends, to abandon his profession. He refused. He determined to see whether, by bringing his voice down to a lower and more moderate key, he might not retain his health, and lose none of his effectiveness as a speaker. For this purpose he went to Greece, placed himself

under the care, first of Atticus, then of Demetrius, the Syrian ; and, after making a circuit round all Asia, in company with the most celebrated orators and rhetoricians, he returned at the end of two years, quite another man. “His way of speaking seemed to have grown cool, and his voice was rendered much easier to himself, and much sweeter to the audience.”<sup>8</sup>

And this danger to health belongs to the preacher also ;—belongs to him, even more than to other speakers, on account of the unwieldy dimensions of the edifice, which his voice is often required to fill. Who has not heard of “the clergyman’s throat?”—a disease of the larynx, which, according to the testimony of medical men, is seldom or never found in other public speakers, whether in parliament or among pleaders at the bar.<sup>9</sup> But, among clergymen, it abounds ; and often produces effects of life-long mischief. By way of practical illustration of the evils resulting from this cause, we may quote the following extract from a charge of Dr. Hort, formerly Archbishop of Tuam :—“Let me here add,” says that prelate, “by way of caution, the danger of forcing and straining the internal organs. I wish I were not an unhappy example of this kind ; and that I did not, to this day, feel the sad effects of making too violent efforts, in the pulpit, many years ago. From

<sup>8</sup> Kennett’s *Essays on Rom. Educat.* Ess. II. p. xxv.

<sup>9</sup> See Whately’s *Rhetoric.* Part IV., c. iv., § 4. Note.



my own experience, therefore, let me advise young preachers who have not the most robust lungs, to have recourse to art and management, rather than to force, for supplying that defect.”<sup>10</sup>

But leaving the question of physical danger to the preacher, from this unnatural straining,—the risk he runs of destroying the natural quality of the voice, injuring the delicate organization of the throat, and laying the foundation, in the lungs and chest, of a lasting, and, perhaps, incurable weakness, let us approach the subject of a rightly-managed voice, from the *hearer's* side. And all his requisitions of us may be summed up in these two,—that we speak *audibly*, and that we speak *pleasantly*.

He requires us to speak audibly; that is, that he may hear everything we say, and have no doubt that what he hears, was said; neither obliged to put in any slipped words, nor to go back over the sentence, to be sure that his ear has not told him false. Is a loud voice necessary for this? or even an ordinary voice, pitched very high? Quite the contrary. For the one is likely to be followed by an echo, and the other is almost sure to run up to a speedily-expended scream. Many preachers have found a loud 'or powerful voice anything but an advantage. Obligated to confine themselves to a subdued, low-pitched monotone, they lose the benefit of those delicate inflexions, which are so

<sup>10</sup> The “Clergyman's Instructor, or, Tracts on Ministerial Duties.” Oxon.

helpful to distinctness ; whilst if, as is commonly the case in large churches, there be anything of reverberation, they cannot, without an unpleasing slowness of utterance, get a single word clearly out. The voice is continually coming back,—waves of sound meeting and breaking upon each other,—a very chaos of words to listen to, and confounding as the strife of tongues.

It seems, therefore, to be a merciful appointment of the Author of our being, that, for effective speaking purposes, no voice is more favourable than one of ordinary or middle compass, and that, too, pitched no higher than what elocutionists call its “natural bell-tone.”<sup>11</sup> This, besides having the largest capabilities of inflexion, and therefore helpful to distinct articulation by allowing an occasional rise or fall, is found to be the voice, which will both reach the furthest, and, by the speaker, can be kept up the best. Whilst, if a man strains himself to get out of this natural tone, he does not know where his throat may carry him. A screech, a howl, a bark, a choking for utterance, or a dead stop for want of breath,—any of these he may come to. He cannot answer for himself,—for anything, save for this, that he is sure not to be heard. But let him speak in his natural voice ; let him keep it up to the end of the sentence ; let him give to every word its proper share of mouth, and breath, and tongue, and teeth, instead of

<sup>11</sup> See the “Art of Extempore Speaking,” by the Abbé Bautain, 1859, p. 88. Engl. edit.

pounding together two or three words into one,—and even with a weak voice, he will be able to make himself heard. Especially should the habit be cultivated of distinct enunciation. Of course there may be pedantry in this, as in everything else ; and men may get into a way of mincing, and measuring, and making much ado about little words. But better this, than the continuous rattle of some huge pollysyllabic sentence, where the little words get trodden out, and the great ones, strung together like a file of Alpine climbers, are obliged each one to hold on by the next.

But besides speaking *audibly*, our hearers require of us that we should speak *pleasantly*. Whitefield's voice, while of compass enough to be heard easily by an open-air congregation of thirty-thousand people, was so captivating, that Franklin declared it produced in him the same kind of pleasure he experienced in listening to beautiful music.<sup>12</sup> Of course, no rules of art could give a man such perfection as this. But they may enable him to speak agreeably, that is, without anything in the use of the vocal organs, which should be repulsive or offending ; without that wearisome drawl, for instance, which makes one have to watch for the words coming forth, as for a snail coming out of its shell ; or that nasal accompaniment which assimilates, too nearly, to the notes of an instrument out of tune ; or that harsh, coarse, unmitigated gruffness, which reminds us far less of a "pleasant

<sup>12</sup> See *Quarterly Review*. Vol. cii., p. 479.

voice" from the pulpit of an Ezekiel, than of a cynic growl from the tub of a Diogenes.

How various are these drawbacks upon an agreeable elocution, and of how long growth, we may learn from a picture drawn for us, in an old black letter book, on Rhetoric, published in 1553. "Some there be that either naturally or through folly, have such evil voices and such lack of utterance . . . that it much defaceth all their doings. One pipes out his words so small, through default of his windpipe, that ye would think he whistled. Another is so hoarse in his throat, that a man would think he came lately from the scouring of harness. Another speaks as though he had plums in his mouth. Another speaks in his throat, as though a good ale crumb stuck fast. Another rattles his words. Another chops his words. Another speaks as though his words had need to be heaved out with levers. Another speaks as though his words should be weighed out in a balance. Another gapes to catch wind at every third word. . . . Some sighs out their words. Some sings their sentences. Some cackles like a hen or a jackdaw. Some cries out so loud that they would make a man's ears ake to hear them." <sup>1</sup>

Rules, against the contraction of these unfortunate and eccentric habits, it would be difficult to suggest, even if it came within the purpose of a work like this to offer them. We are dealing, chiefly, with the question of secondary aids to effective preaching; and, among

<sup>13</sup> Pott's *Liber Cantabrigiensis*, 175th of Aphorisms and Maxims.

them, we put down a culture of the organs of speech. And abundantly will these repay culture. No function of the human organization is capable of greater improvement, by artificial means, than the voice. Defects may be overcome. Increased power may be gained. The musical quality of it may be improved; and a power of sympathy, with all that is pure in feeling and refined in thought, may be imparted to it,—fairly entitling it to be considered among the highest endowments of our humanity; and, by its union with an intellectual soul, justifying the expression that “the tongue is the glory of man.”

Before passing from the subject of vocal expression, as applied to preaching, we may, perhaps, be excused for touching upon another point;—of little account to notice in a book, some may think, but, as George Herbert says, the country parson “holds the rule that nothing is little in God’s service.” We allude to the importance of a cultivated accuracy of *pronunciation*. Very remarkable was the prominence assigned to this in the educational systems of antiquity. From the earliest age among the Romans, children, designed for public life, were kept as much as possible from any associations which might corrupt their purity of diction; and were placed under the care of highly-educated women, with a view, especially, to their acquiring the nicest grammatical accuracy, in speaking their native tongue. The mothers of the Gracchi, of Julius

Cæsar, and of Augustus, are said to have filled these offices.<sup>14</sup> And the importance which, according to Cicero and Quintilian, was attached to correct expression by the Roman people, would seem to justify this care. They loved nothing, in an orator, so much as a "clean, shining phrase." And such nicely-attuned ears did they bring to a recitation, that one slip in quantity would have filled the theatre with hisses.

Now would all public speakers among ourselves, like to subject their orthoepy to the ordeal of such a critical audience? Would all preachers like to do so? To say nothing of the ill usage sometimes offered to that unfortunate letter in our alphabet, which makes the name of Jezebel so much safer, for some persons, to pronounce than that of her husband, has not its antecedent neighbour 'g' a right to complain of the use made of it by some public speakers, when its lot falls at the end of a word? Is it not sometimes turned into a base cacophony of half 'g' and half 'k'? and sometimes made to disappear as absolutely as when a '*dele*' is put against it in a printer's proof? Against the inveterateness of this last provincialism, no scholarship is proof. Often are we asked to pray for our clergy, that "they may have a true knowledge and understandin of God's word," as well as "set it forth by their preachin' and livin'"; and yet the only recompense we get, from him who ministers for us, is to be sent home with only a mutilated blessin'.

<sup>14</sup> Kennett's Essay on the Roman Educat., p. xiv.



And other faults of pronunciation are there which many persons seem to be at no pains to conquer (*conker*). What are the great merits of the letter ‘z,’ for instance, that, with some readers, we cannot be exhorted to the duty of general confession, without being told that the “Scripture moveth us in sundry *plazes*?” or that we cannot have a sentence in which the pronoun “us” occurs, without being reminded of the land that Job came from? Or what, again, are the offences of the letter ‘r,’ that, by men from some counties, it should first (*fust*) be cast out of the church (*chutch*), and after that, perhaps, be joined on, bodily to the ranks of her enemies (*renemies*)? For many of these peculiarities, no doubt, the authority of the best *provincial* usage may be cited; and if ‘use’ makes the ‘right,’ it may be said, why should the ‘country’ be obliged to take its laws from the ‘town?’ But, whether the country do so or not, it is quite clear that the preacher should. And that for this reason; that, while the *standard* or *normal* dialect of a language is neither unintelligible, nor unpleasing to those who may be familiar with certain provincial peculiarities, the Doric of the provinces *does* become unpleasant, and often something more, to those who are familiar only with the Attic of the capital. In these days of rapid locomotion, all parts of the country are brought closer together. We shall soon, it may be believed, neither speak in local dialects, nor regulate time by local clocks. But shall all

approach nearer to the same standard of vernacular pronunciation, just as chronometers along the lines of railway all keep one solar time.

From the right use of the voice, as subservient to the ends of a persuasive elocution, we pass on to consider the other bodily organs ; and must try to meet, fairly and without prejudice, the propriety, in our pulpit exercises, of using anything like *gesture or action*. On action, as applied to oratory, in general, we have a great authority thus delivering himself. “ If,” says Dr. Johnson, as though by one crushing and demonstrative illustration, he would pin down our arms, and keep us motionless for all time, “ if I could once find a speaker, in Change-alley, raising the price of stocks, by the power of persuasive gestures, I should very zealously recommend the study of this art ; but having never seen any action by which language was much assisted, I have been hitherto inclined to doubt whether my countrymen are not blamed too hastily for their calm and motionless utterance.” Now, as far as the illustration contained in this passage goes, probably, the first retort most of us would be disposed to make on the learned doctor, would be, ‘ Did he ever go to Change-alley ? Did he ever see a broker, expatiating, to his client, on the stirring events of the times ; and urging him not to lose a moment, in availing himself of some recommended investment of his capital ?’ A more un-

fortunate illustration, it may be believed, could hardly have been chosen, or one less calculated to recommend that "calm and motionless utterance," which, in the judgment of Johnson, constitutes the charm of our national oratory.<sup>15</sup>

But what, on this question, do we learn from other authorities? or from a source, which is better than authorities, namely, the custom of men who have left an influence and a name behind them, which must entitle their personal practice to consideration and respect? The bias of our classical authorities, in the matter, we all know. The thrice repeated summing up of Demosthenes,—action, action, action,—as alone sufficient to make a good orator, we have heard of again and again. Whilst to the use of gesture among the Romans, it would be difficult to say what limits were assigned. Cicero tells us that, on one occasion, he snatched an infant from the arms of a bystander, and held it until

<sup>15</sup> Another instance of the Doctor's illogical spite against action, occurs in his life of Dr. Watts. "He did not endeavour to assist his eloquence by any gesticulations; for as no corporeal actions have any correspondence with theological truth, he did not see how they could enforce it." *Non meus hic sermo*, we suspect Dr. Watts would have said to this. The want of homogeneity in the things spoken of, upon which the point of the *reductio ad absurdum* turns, is a pure fiction of Johnson's own. Suppose he had said, "As no corporeal actions have any correspondence with the *oral enunciation* of theological truth," what would have been the force of the argument then?

his audience wept aloud. And Antonius considers he made a master-stroke of effective pleading, when, in the midst of his speech for Aquilius, he tore open the vest of his client, to shew the wounds he had received in his country's service.

Tending to the same conclusion, and in favour of what most of us should agree in describing as exaggerated action, are the preserved records of the manner of some of our greatest English preachers. A writer in the *Quarterly Review*, speaking of Whitefield, says, "His vehemence was excessive. A poor man said that he preached like a lion. Sometimes he stamped, sometimes he wept, sometimes he stopped, exhausted by emotion, and appeared as if he was about to expire. He usually vomited after the exertions of the day, and often brought up blood."<sup>16</sup> Yet this was the man whom the cold and sceptical Franklin would travel twenty miles to hear; and who, as he himself relates, wrought so powerfully upon his feelings on one occasion, when a collection was to be made, that he could not refrain from emptying into the alms-dish, the whole contents of his pocket,—gold and all. More surprised are we to find instances of this exaggerated and violent declamation, in a much later age; and especially, among such a reasoning and reflective people, as the Scotch. Yet take the following from the pages of another able Review. "Dr. Chalmers, on great occasions,

<sup>16</sup> Oct 1857. Vol. cii. p. 478.

was absolutely terrible. His heavy frame was convulsed; his face flushed and grew pythic; the veins on his forehead and neck stood out like cordage; his voice cracked or reached to a shriek: foam flew from his mouth in flakes; he hung over his audience menacing them with his shaking fist, or he stood erect maniacal and stamping.”<sup>17</sup>

Now dislike, as we may and must, all these elocutionary extravagances, especially in the pulpit, we cannot help allowing that, underlying them, there must be some substratum of truth and nature. They shew that, in giving utterance to its thoughts, the mind insists upon having with it, the entire sympathy of the bodily organs. Very unsuited often, and, in the case of beautiful thoughts, with a strange unlikeness, may the expression of this sympathy be. But still a man would not be sawing the air, or swinging with his body, or jerking a clenched fist, or grasping the ledge of his pulpit as tightly, as he would hold by the arms of a chair, when under the hands of the dentist,—if it were natural to him to keep still. But this is *not* natural to him; and hence all his bad and inappropriate gesture. The protests of his instincts, under strong emotion, are against *quiescence*, but not against awkward movement. Nature tells him his arms *should* be moved, but she does not necessarily tell him *how*.

Neither, except within very narrow limits, can any

<sup>17</sup> *British Quarterly Review*, April 1857, p. 470.

rules of art tell him *how*. We should be afraid, in such a matter, to trust a professor for very much more than a *negative* service. His positive rules, if acted upon, could scarcely fail to generate a mannerism,—an artificial movement, fashioned, perhaps, upon some living type; or executed according to mechanical rules; or, at all events, interfering with that perfect naturalness of manner, which, provided there be nothing awkward in it, always sits best upon a man; and which, even if less graceful than some which he might have borrowed, will be sure to please, because it is his own.<sup>18</sup> As savouring of the artist, people will not bear anything of imitated manner; and we ought not to desire that they should. It is a tacit homage to our moral sincerity,—to the view we are supposed to take of our own solemn responsibilities,—that our congregations will not endure an actor. Art, if it appear art, is the object of their “implacable disgust.” They will even prefer awkwardness to affectation, and the most ungraceful peculiarity to mere histrionic trick. Hence, if he who should undertake to guide us in our practical delivery, will only save us from the inelegant, and the ungraceful, and the ludicrous, and the grotesque,—it is almost as much as we should expect him to do. For anything beyond this, the body must be left to itself;

<sup>18</sup> Boileau well observes (*Eloge du Vrai*),

“Chacun, pris dans son air, est agréable en soi;

Ce n'est que l'air d'autrui qui peut déplaire en moi.”



to the idiosyncracies of its own natural movements ;—evinced sympathy with the mind's workings *in* the pulpit, just as it would *out* of it,—without consciousness, and without a law.

Upon the whole, it will be gathered, that, while disagreeing with the theory of Johnson upon the propriety of oratorical gesture, in general, we could not, in the present temper of our English congregations, recommend a very prodigal use of action in the pulpit. Whether it be from something peculiar in our Anglo-Saxon temperament ; or from our long-continued use of the manuscript sermon, making the sight of action in the pulpit unfamiliar to us ; or, more likely still, from the fact, that such specimens of action, as we do witness, are very ungraceful or very bad, it is certain, that, as a rule, our congregations have come to look, with much disfavour, on a very energetic elocution.<sup>19</sup> With the revival, or more extended adoption among us, of extemporaneous preaching, it is possible the prejudice may wear off ; because, in that style, we are prompted

<sup>19</sup> Sydney Smith humourously refers it all to a national prejudice. " Their dislikes," he says, " have proceeded a good deal from their hatred to the French : and because that country is the native soil of elegance, animation, and grace, a certain patriotic solidity, and loyal awkwardness, have become the characteristic of this : so that an adventurous preacher is afraid of violating the ancient tranquillity of the pulpit ; and the audience are commonly apt to consider the man who tires them less than usual, as a trifler or a charlatan."

by an almost irrepressible instinct to use *some* kind of action, and that which we *must* do somehow, it may be hoped, we shall soon learn to do naturally and well. But, until the principles of a good elocution are both better taught, and better understood, we venture to suggest that, to be over-sparing in the use of gesture, is to err on the safer side.

We note another of our corporeal aids for giving effect to oral delivery, namely *the expression of the countenance*.

The entire sympathy which a speaker's face may be made to exhibit with his mental processes, the running commentary it may furnish upon the chief aim and scope of his discourse, is, in nothing more apparent than in the almost universal desire, among hearers, to occupy a position whence they can *see* the preacher. They regard the advantage of such a situation as almost another sense to them; knowing that, where there is great power of expression in the speaker, the eye takes in almost as much as the ear. "In ore sunt omnia," says Cicero. Man's face is the mirror of his soul, says another authority. "Nothing speaks like the countenance," says Fénelon; and again, "one well-timed look will pierce to the bottom of the heart."

Important, however, as this instrument is, among the aids to a good delivery, we may say of it, far more absolutely than we could do in the case of oratorical

action, that no positive excellence is to be attained in it by means of culture, or by rules of art. In this case, not only is it true that "*prima virtus est carere vitio*," but it is the only virtue which any teaching will avail to give. That the face should not put on always the same solemn-looking and staid demureness, nor be lighted up always with the same simpering and effeminate smile; that we should not compress the countenance into an expression of the most cold and stolid apathy, lest we should betray an excess of feeling; nor distend the facial muscles in every direction, lest we should seem not to feel enough,—are all counsels which, if unfortunately needed by us, it might be well that we should have some judicious teacher to enforce. But, for anything beyond this—for skill to make the face a book wherein men may read great thoughts; for the power, while addressing an audience, to make passion move, and indignation arouse, and tenderness encourage, and love dissuade, all through the varied play of an eloquent physiognomy,—it is certain that art, and the rules of art, will avail us nothing. It is nature's sole prerogative. It must come spontaneously, or it will never come at all.

And thus are we brought, in the last place, to speak of that element of a good delivery which no art can give, and which it must be at the peril of our own souls, if, by means of art, we are ever tempted to assume. We mean deep earnestness; the untaught rhetoric of

an impressed and loving heart; the fervour of the dying man, speaking to dying men. We have often heard of the answer returned by Garrick to a clergyman, expressing wonder that he, with a message of sublimest truth to deliver, should not awaken so much emotion, in his hearers, as the actor could do, while dealing in avowed fiction: "The reason is," said the tragedian, "that we deliver fiction as if it were truth, and you deliver truth as if it were fiction."<sup>20</sup> The witticism may be too sharply pointed. Most witticisms are. But there can be no doubt that there are preachers, who, whatever their topic be, never get out of their hard, feelingless monotony; whose highest ambition seems to be that they should be

"Coldly correct, and critically dull;"—

who seem to be falling asleep of their dignity, while their lips are uttering the living truths of the living God. And, with worldly men, and, indeed, with hearers generally, this kind of languid apathy must convey the impression of insincerity and hollowness. The man could not be so listless, they think, if he believed in the truth of his own message. They know that, if he have realised the urgent responsibilities of his position, he must often feel himself in the condition of Paul, when calling aloud to the Philippian jailer to stay his hand from its suicidal purpose; or when remon-

<sup>20</sup> Whately's Rhetoric, Part IV., c. ii.

strating in impassioned language, with the men of Lystra, on their idolatrous follies. And yet, whether he said to the one, "Do thyself no harm," or to the other, "Why do ye such things?" his tone of voice would never alter from that, in which he would give the date of some fact of history, or quote a sentence from the creed.

Greatly is it to be feared, that the fault of all this is *within*. The man is the father of the preacher. The heart would speak out of its abundance, if the love of good things were there. Of earnestness, especially, that rule holds "*pectus disertum facit.*" If the heart be not warmed, whatever the ability of the preacher, all will be cold besides. We shall have cold words, cold looks, cold and, it may be, faultless proprieties; but it will be the chill of the moonbeam, without its brightness; the polished marble of the statue, but not its life. Such preachers may well bring home to us that heart-stirring reproof of Baxter:—"Alas, alas!" he exclaims, "how few ministers preach with all their might, or speak about everlasting joys and torments, in such a manner as may make men believe that they are in earnest. It would make a man's heart ache, to see a number of dead and drowsy sinners sit under a minister, without having a word that is likely to quicken or awaken them; . . . to hear what excellent subjects some ministers treat upon, who yet let them die in their hands for want of a close and lively application; what

fit matter they have for convincing sinners, and yet how little they make of it. . . . In the name of God, brethren, awaken your hearts before you come into the pulpit; that when you are there, you may be fit to awaken the hearts of sinners.”<sup>21</sup>

But can we awaken our hearts? and is a man, in order to avail himself of those deep sympathies of our religious nature, which warmth of manner is calculated to call forth, to work himself up into a *trick* of fervidness, and affect an earnestness which he does not feel? None will suppose us to recommend this; but the question touches closely upon one of the trials of good men, and we should meet it fairly. Now, it is to be admitted, that preachers, holy and humble men of heart though they be, may be carried away by a kind of sensible excitement. “As iron sharpeneth iron,” so the turning, towards a speaker, of a thousand lighted-up countenances, will often beget a fervour, and glow of emotion, not coming from the depth of the heart, and which, as an index of the intensity of his spiritual solicitudes, is not true. And the after-thought of such a deceptive show is very humbling to a good man. He almost feels to have been acting a part; and goes home to bewail, before God, that he has seemed to be what he is not. Still he is not, on that account, to put his feelings under an interdict, or, for fear of excess, to check the free flow of a manly earnestness. For infirmities, such

<sup>21</sup> Reformed Pastor.



as these, especially, we may cast ourselves upon the sympathy of Him, who has undertaken to bear the iniquity of our holy things."

And many earnest-minded men, we are persuaded, have come down from the pulpit, distressed with the thought of their own unrealness, on other grounds. They have had to minister before the Lord, when their own hearts were out of tune. Their spirit was fretted by some secret sorrow. The fear of coming evil lay upon them,—a great stone of difficulty, which, to all seeming, only an angel's hand could roll away. And yet, to outward observation, there must be no difference, in the fervour with which they speak of the things of God. They must seem to be absorbed in their message, when their thoughts are taken up with themselves. Or this deplored unrealness may have a deeper and more abiding root; in a constitutional sluggishness of temperament, which has to be coerced and stimulated into sympathy with an ever-deepening sense of the momentousness of Gospel truth, and the growing demands of the spiritual mind. And we are in a strait betwixt two; between the danger, on the one hand, of falling into a habit of simulated and artificial warmth; or, on the other, of losing the benefit of an earnestness, which, though it be the desire of our hearts to feel, yet is it no part of our natural manner to express. In these, and the like cases, it is manifest,

we can but give ourselves unto prayer. With the humble consciousness of our two-fold danger, we shall not be permitted to fall into either. We shall feel that we are not called upon to make our manner express *less*, but to ask of God that our hearts may feel *more*.

At all events, for the preacher it will be enough, and for his hearers too, to know that he is *honest*; that his "heart's desire and prayer," for them that hear him is, "that they may be saved." That his heart beats not so warmly, as an Apostle's heart, and, at times, seems even cold, is his infirmity. But he mourns over it; if needful, may mourn over it even to *them*. They will see earnestness in his bewailed want of earnestness; more then, perhaps, than if it had shewn itself in outward signs. Fain would he "offer himself upon the sacrifice and service of their faith;" and see all those for whom he ministers partakers of his grace: —'partakers of my grace,' he might say to them, 'but not of my weakness; of my faith in Christ, but not of my too languid love; of my firm persuasion of those solemn realities which relate to death, to the resurrection, to the judgment, to the world unseen, but not of that drag upon my powers of thought and utterance, which chills the preacher's heart, and tends to make his message vain.' In this confessed weakness there is strength;—the weakness being of man,

while the strength is the strength of God. And the language of the Apostle may then be our language :—"Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 9.

## CHAPTER IX.

## EXTEMPORE PREACHING, AND ITS EFFICACY AS COMPARED WITH THE WRITTEN SERMON.

The bearing of the foregoing chapters—Popular view of the relative advantages of the extemporaneous and the written styles—Primitive practice—Written style, when introduced—The practice of continental and other preachers—Arguments for the partial retention of the written style—Advantage to the same preacher of cultivating both styles—Different methods of extempore preaching—The memoriter method—The method from short notes—The self-reliant method—General qualifications necessary—Facile and correct expression—How to be acquired—Cultivation of the memory—Necessity of writing—Temptations of the extempore preacher.

WE now come to a branch of our subject, upon which, if any absolute decision is to be pronounced, it may seem that much of what has been said, in some of the preceding chapters, might have been spared. To what purpose, it may be said, is a preacher exhorted to study the graces and proprieties of style,—the structure of sentences, or the choice of words,—if, after having

duly considered the argument of his intended sermon, he is to trust to the inspirations of the moment, to present it in proper verbal form? On the other hand, how little scope can there be for those bodily accessories to an animated delivery—the “*vividus vultus, vividi oculi, vividæ manus, denique omnia vivida*,” of the great German Reformer,—if the eyes are scarcely lifted from the manuscript, and the hands have enough to do to turn over the leaves? A little consideration, however, will shew that the two modes of address referred to, are not so entirely different from each other, as this objection would seem to imply. On the contrary, it will be found that their leading characteristics, at least in the hands of a master, are shared, by one style and the other, in common; and that a good extemporaneous preacher would no more trust entirely to his oratorical inspirations, than a good reader of his sermons would allow himself to be bound, eyes and hands, to his book. No doubt we expect, in the composition of the written sermon, a little more of care and correctness; and, in the delivery of the extempore sermon, are prepared for somewhat more of animation and warmth. But it does not, therefore, follow, that the extemporaneous preacher is to be slovenly in his diction, or, that the reader from the manuscript should be without force or fire.

Two practical illustrations, each taken from a master in his way, will serve to explain our meaning. The

first is from Robert Hall. When a copy, for the press, was being submitted to him, of his celebrated sermon on "Modern Infidelity," and he had come to the striking apostrophe, "Eternal God! on what are thine enemies intent? What are those enterprises of guilt and horror, that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of heaven must not penetrate!"—he asked, "Did I say penetrate, sir, when I preached it? Be so good, as to take your pencil, and, for '*penetrate*,' put '*pierce*:'—no man who considered the force of the English language, would use a word of three syllables there, but from absolute necessity. *Pierce* is the word, sir, and the only word to be used there."<sup>1</sup> Here, at least, we have extempore preaching coupled with delicate appreciation of correct style. Of '*fire*,' in connection with the written delivery, our example is taken from an anecdote in the life of Dr. Chalmers. A Fifeshire old woman had been taunted for being, in the teeth of the national prejudice, a follower of a preacher, who read from *a book*. "Ay, ay," replied the admirer of Chalmers, "the doctor *reads*, but O, it's *fell* reading though!"

Let us look, first, then at what is popularly urged in favour of the two styles of address,—the written and the extemporaneous style respectively,—taking the latter, in its clerically understood sense, at all events, as implying, with whatever amount of previous prepa-

<sup>1</sup> R. Hall's Works, Note by Dr. Gregory, vol. i., p. 11.



ration, the absence of a fully written sermon. Now the advocates for the written discourse will contend for it, that, as against all failures, it enables us to secure, to the hearer, the advantages of correct expression, lucid order, well-considered argument; that, in enunciating the more important doctrines of the faith, the preacher is preserved from the liability to an unguarded looseness and ambiguity of statement; and, generally, that a higher degree of exactness and finish can be given to his sentences, than he could hope to achieve by the utmost proficiency in extemporaneous utterance. To this, it is replied, by those on the other side, that, if only there be the requisite amount of previous consideration and thought,—both well-sustained structural arrangement, and even accuracy of verbal expression, are almost as attainable under one system, as under the other;—whilst, as to the greater refinement and polish of diction, secured by the written style, this, so far from being an advantage, is calculated to take off from that manly and unstudied naturalness of expression, which we regard as the normal type of all effective oratory. But then, rejoins the champion of the manuscript, consider how few persons there are, who attain even to mediocrity in extempore preaching; and how much less painful it is to listen to the most dry, somnolent, and sluggish of our written homilies, than to the rapid tautologies, and declamatory verboseness of a mere spin-text; and further, how many educated people are disgusted and

driven away, as they witness, in a man who has put his 'prentice hand' to this craft, the embarrassment, the little artifice, the dragging in of a long Scripture text, the falling back upon some stock passage,—all telling but too plainly that either through the failure of memory, or the bankruptcy of invention, he is on the point of breaking down. 'But your manuscript has driven many away too,' answers the advocate of a spoken delivery. 'Have not the poor passed in a great measure from under your influence? Have they not sought and found, in the rough and unchastened rhetoric of men, not having a tithe of your educational appliances, something that touched the springs of their religious nature with a power, to which, under your more mannerly and polished lucubrations, they had been utter strangers? Whilst, as to the mortifying failures you speak of, we believe them to arise, for the most part, from an underrated estimate of the pains needful to success; and, therefore, not an argument for throwing away the instrument altogether, but only a reason why men should try after greater expertness in its use.'

Now waiving for the present, the necessity of pronouncing upon the relative strength of these opposing considerations, let us examine the issue raised, on somewhat higher and more general grounds. Thus the question is one, in which the authority of primitive usage ought to have a voice,—the practice of the Apostles, as far as the parallel could be drawn; or that of

the first Christian preachers afterwards. The voice, as far as its utterances are to be taken, would, we think, be on the side of the extempore preacher, and against the written discourse. The example of the Apostles, in the case, would, by some, perhaps, be disallowed. Their sermons *were* inspirations in the highest sense. It was given to them of the Holy Spirit "what they should speak." But so it was given to them of the Holy Spirit, what they should "write." And, if it had been the design of Scripture to impress its sanction on the *written*, in preference to the *oral* address, it is not quite apparent why Peter should not have been instructed to write his sermon for the day of Pentecost, or Paul to have declaimed, from a manuscript, when he was at Mars' hill.

That neither of these Apostles did so, we are all agreed. Neither, as far as we know, did the first preachers after them. Our records of the mode of preaching, in the first Christian centuries, are but scanty; but, as far as they go, they favour the supposition of the adoption, by their preachers, of the *unwritten* though not, as a rule, the unpremeditated address. Now and then, a preacher was called upon, without previous notice, to give an exposition of some passage of Scripture, which had been read in the assembly; and on certain occasions, it was allowed, to a man, to read his own prepared discourse. But the general rule, among the early preachers, undoubtedly, was to

digest and prepare their materials at home ; and then, either with or without short notes, to deliver their discourse, much as any good extemporaneous preacher would do at this day.<sup>2</sup> With regard to the mode in which so many tomes of this spoken matter have been preserved to us, it may be observed, in passing, that, as early as the time of Origen, we have notices of shorthand writers (*δξυγράφοι*) employed in the taking down of sermons,—men licensed by public authority, and who, before publication, were expected to submit their manuscripts to the preacher.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Moule's *Christian Oratory of the First Five Centuries*, p. 58, and Riddle's *Christian Antiquities*, Book IV. chap. i. p. 413.

<sup>3</sup> In giving an account of these shorthand writers, or notaries, as he calls them, Bingham refers to complaints made in the Primitive Church, with which, some preachers, in our own day, can but too keenly sympathize. He says, "The public notaries were generally allowed, by the author's consent, to publish what they wrote ; in which case it was usual for the preacher to review his own sermon, and to correct such mistakes, and supply such deficiencies, as might be occasioned by the haste of the scribe, or some things not so accurately spoken by themselves in sudden and extempore discourse. (Gregor. M. Præf. in Jobum ad Leonard, Præf. in Ezek.) But sometimes the notaries published what they had written without the author's knowledge and consent. We find Gaudentius (about A.D. 386) remonstrating against this as a *clandestine practice*. *Antiq.* Book XIV. chap. iv. § 29. May it be permitted to the Author to take this opportunity of repudiating the authenticity of a certain weekly publication, called the "Golden Lectures."

But when was this innovation of the written sermon introduced? and in what sections of the Catholic Church does it obtain? The first of these questions has been answered differently; some referring it to the period of the civil wars; and others claiming for its introduction an earlier date, making it coincident with the beginning of the Reformation. This is Bishop Burnet's view, which we may thus shortly condense. For some time previous, there had been no preaching but in Lent;—the preachings, at the other seasons of the year, being restricted to festival days, when the sermons were mere panegyrics upon the particular saint, or in commendation of his relics. Seeing dangers ahead, the friars began to feel that they must turn preaching to a more profitable account; and accordingly, by “passionate and affecting discourses,” they kindled the blind devotion of the people into admiration of pilgrimages, relics, shrines, and whatever else might fill the coffers of the church. The Reformers saw the value of this long-neglected instrument; and resolved to take it up in a holier cause, and for better ends. But their zeal was not according to knowledge. “Foul and indiscreet reflections on the other party” entered into their discourses; until at length, adds the historian, “the preachers being often accused for their sermons, and complaints being made to the king, by hot men on both sides, they came gener-

ally to write and read their sermons. From thence the reading of sermons grew into a practice in this church.”<sup>4</sup>

The practice, however, as we know, was not adopted by the later of our English Reformers ; and, indeed, seems to have fallen so far into desuetude, as to have made its re-introduction, in the troublous times of the Puritans, appear like a practice, theretofore unknown in the Church. Hence, in the well known proclamation of Charles the Second, to the University of Cambridge, forbidding “ on pain of his majesty’s displeasure,” the practice of reading sermons, he speaks of this practice as one, “ which took its *beginning* from the disorders of the late times ;” but which, as being “ a supine and slothful way of preaching, he commands to be laid aside.” Whether contempt for the monarch’s judgment, on such a subject, prevailed over clerical loyalty, we cannot tell ; but from that time to this, the proclamation seems never to have influenced the practice of the English Church.

The other question,—that is, in what sections of the professing Church does the practice of reading sermons prevail,—may be answered more easily. Bishop Burnet gave the answer to it, up to his own time ; and his dictum will not be far wrong, if allowed to be extended to our own. “ Reading,” he says, “ is pecu-

<sup>4</sup> Hist. of Reform. Vol. I. Part 1, Book iii. p. 510. Ed. 1837.



liar to this nation, and is endured in no other.”<sup>5</sup> And we see the proof of this, in all countries and in all churches. In France, we never hear of such a practice. Even among Irish Protestants it is almost entirely laid aside. In Scotland, it is abjured with an almost superstitious dread. The Wesleyans would relegate to the shop-board or the plough, a candidate for the ministry, who could not do without his notes ; whilst, by other Dissenters, the reading of a sermon is only tolerated as an infirmity, which they hope the preacher will be able to overcome ; and which, until he does, he must use all lawful artifice to conceal.

Still less of countenance to this habit of reading from a manuscript, can be found in other forms of popular address, of which the aim, like that of the preacher, is, to gain the practical assent of the hearer. What pleader, at the bar, would think of addressing a jury, from a written speech ? How impatient is the House of Commons of eloquence, of which even a few notes only are fastened in the lining of the member’s hat ? And how soon would our great religious meetings dwindle down to a scattered remnant, if every speaker, as he was called upon, began to spread out a paper, written within and without, like the prophet’s roll ? instances these, all tending to bear out that observation of Sir Walter Scott, “ It is conclusive against the frigid custom of reading sermons, that in any other mode of

<sup>5</sup> Pastoral Care, chap. ix. p. 155. Ed. 1840.

public speaking it would be held childish and absurd.”<sup>6</sup>

Thus, Gospel authority, primitive usage, the custom of the Catholic Church everywhere, and the conclusion from what is found to be effective in public speaking of every other kind, are all *against* the written sermon. What considerations can be urged, in arrest of the sentence, that it be proscribed from our pulpits forthwith, and a patent of exclusive preference be made out for the extemporaneous discourse?

We think there are several reasons against such absolute limitation to one kind of homiletical address.

First, we have a large class of sermons, in our Church, addressed to auditories, who are accustomed to habits of close thought; who are conversant already, it may be presumed, with the first elements of moral and religious truth; and for whom, therefore, the logical exactness and higher range of the written sermon would seem to be more suitable, than anything which the average standard of extemporaneous ability would be likely to furnish. Such auditories may be supposed to be assembled at ecclesiastical visitations; at the chapels of the Inns of Court; at sermons before the Universities; as well as on innumerable public occas-

<sup>6</sup> It is not a little curious that the one marked exception to this statement should be found among the French, who, with an absolute proscription of the manuscript from the *pulpit*, yet allow of speeches being read in their legislative chambers.

ions, when custom requires the publication of the sermon afterwards.

Again, we should protest against this banishment, from the pulpit, of all written sermons, in the name of our theological, or rather our religious literature. Bishop Burnet, as we have seen, was a great advocate for extempore preaching;—might be expected to be, from the marvellous power he himself possessed in that way,—a power so great, that, when, on one occasion, at the Rolls Chapel, after having preached till his hour glass had run out, he turned it upside down to intimate that he would go on for another hour, the congregation set up almost a shout for joy. But hear what his testimony is about our obligations to the written sermon. “It has produced,” he says, in his *Pastoral Care*, “many volumes of the best that are extant.”<sup>7</sup> Again, in his account of the written sermons, in Henry the Eighth’s time, already referred to, he says, “In which, if there was not that heat and fire, which the friars had shewed in their declamations. . . . Yet it has produced the greatest treasure of weighty, good, and sound sermons, which ever the Church of God had.”<sup>8</sup> Now we are not saying that we should have no good sermons published, if the written discourse were to disappear wholly from our pulpit. But we do say that some of the most profitable productions of human thought, in that case, would, in all probability, never

<sup>7</sup> Ch. ix. p. 156.

<sup>8</sup> Hist. of Ref. Vol. I., Part 1., Book iii.

see the light. We should not, perhaps, be willing to bring many of the sermons of Whitefield, under that designation. But whatever these were, it is certain that, of sermons which he would have considered his *best*, we have nothing left. Robert Hall's sermons, we know, were of this high class; and the scant memorials of his amateur stenographers may sufficiently indicate how much the world has lost.

But it is not on account of the loss of great sermons alone, or even chiefly, that we should deplore the banishment of the manuscript from our pulpits. The published sermons, delivered to our ordinary congregations, form more than half the religious literature of our middle and upper classes. They may be said to form the staple of our household divinity; and many, in this way, are led to give attention to difficult and important subjects of dogmatical theology, who would never give themselves any trouble about them, if presented in more direct and didactic form. Of course, it is quite possible that we *might* publish as many sermons as we do now, if we were all extemporizers. But the paucity of sermons published by Dissenters and those who *do* extemporize, does not favour the probability that we *should*. Nor would the demand for publication, on the part of hearers, be the same. They would feel that the printed sermon was not the same as the one they had listened to. It might be very much better,—in development more full, and in

form more perfect. But they do not care for these after-growths: their love was for the chrysalis, not for the creature of bright hues and expanded wing.

Neither are we prepared to surrender, even the *stated* use of the manuscript, as, in some cases, a suitable vehicle of instruction for our more educated and intellectual congregations. Whether all preachers, who are really fit for their office, might not, by dint of pains and practice, attain to so much of extemporaneous facility, as should enable them to speak with ease and credit, on the more ordinary and familiar topics of their ministry, is a point, upon which we shall have something to say presently. But that such a perfection in extemporaneity, as shall enable a man to carry through a long, succinct, well-vertebrated train of thought, can be acquired easily;—that the power to grapple closely with the philosophical difficulty, to discourse with logical clearness on any point of agitated polemics, to define with faultless precision the limits of our knowledge, or of our ignorance, on great gospel mysteries,—is attainable by all but the incompetent and the unfit, is, we think, more than any will undertake to affirm. And yet, on the supposition that the use of the manuscript is forbidden, what is to be done? Are none to enter the sacred vocation, who cannot come up to this high mark? Or, by the preacher who falls short of it, must a tacit compact be made with his

people, that, on certain high and difficult subjects, he is never to speak at all?

In the review of what has been said on the subject of these two styles of address, the question will probably be asked, to what decision do you bring us? and what counsels are to be offered for our practical following? Now it is, perhaps, a necessity of suggestions offered upon points where there obtains a great diversity of practice, that they are sure to be, more or less, the embodiments of the writer's own personalities,—the mere reflection of practical conclusions, which observation may have led him to adopt, and which subsequent experience has never made him see reason to abandon. Be this as it may, the first thing we ourselves ever learned from observation, was, that *both* styles have their warm patrons; that while there are many, who have an almost Presbyterian horror of a manuscript, in the pulpit, there are others, who think their intelligence insulted, by the preacher who should cast it aside. We are aware that Dean Swift thought differently:—declaring his persuasion, that, in disgust at the habit of reading sermons, “the laity would be almost, to a man, on his side.”<sup>9</sup> But we must remember that, in those days, the preacher did *read* his sermon, and nothing more. In our day, it is different; and the question is, why, if both methods have

<sup>9</sup> Letters to a Young Clergyman, vol. 2, p. 203, Lond. 1841.



their partizans, every preacher should not cultivate both? No inherent and insuperable unfitness for pulpit purposes, can be shewn to belong, either to one style or to the other. Practical instances could be cited, in abundance, shewing that it is not necessary for a man to be tautologous and vapid, because he speaks from short notes; nor, on the other hand, because he has a manuscript before him, that he should be mechanical, and lifeless, and dull; whilst, if apparent results for good were to influence the decision to be formed, it is certain, that either style could number, among its supporters, some of the most honoured names in the Church of God.

Only, therefore, for what the experience of an individual mind, and an individual ministry, is worth, is the suggestion offered to any, who may have their pulpit habits yet to form, that, in town congregations, more particularly, it might be found profitable, if one of the two styles of address were adopted at the *earlier* service, whilst, at the *later* service, recourse were had to the other. Many considerations seem to favour this plan. Thus the two styles would be found to benefit and assist each other;—the habit of constant writing, giving precision and clearness to the spoken sermon; and the unconsciously acquired animation of extemporaneous utterance, extending itself, naturally, to the written discourse. Again, the practice recommended would enable us to provide better for the varying tastes and

capacities of our people. The strong partiality for the written, or the unwritten style, may, in most persons, be a mere prejudice. But where no principle is involved, we should be but too glad to avoid offending prejudices,—willing to be made “all things to all men that we may by all means save some.” Besides, without descending to familiarity, it is plain that there is, in the extemporaneous address, a licensed simplicity of illustration, and a tolerated breaking up of the truth of God into small crumbs, which, though very needful for the uneducated and the young, we should feel to be somewhat out of place, if introduced into a written discourse.

Neither does it appear altogether unworthy of notice, among the advantages to a preacher, to cultivate both the manuscript and the spoken styles, that such a practice will tend to *diversify* the character of his preaching; will help to take off something from that inevitable sameness and repeating of himself, which a man, preaching twice or thrice a week, in the same style, to the same people, and that for many years together, is sure himself to feel conscious of, and to fear his people will be conscious of too. Now, we are persuaded that a man may greatly break this feared monotony, in his preaching, by adopting, as a rule, the *written* method at one part of the day, and the *extemporaneous* method at the other. No man *speaks* exactly as he would write, or *writes* exactly as he would speak. The words used may be almost the same, in both

cases ; but, on the ear of a listener, they will not fall the same, when read from a manuscript, as they do when, with all the unconscious animation of the extemporaneous address, the preacher is speaking to us face to face. To men of very fertile invention, we can imagine, the advantage here held out, will be little accounted of. But to others, who, being less gifted, often find the mind running into old ruts of thought, and are puzzled how to vary an illustration, with which they are afraid the memories of their congregation may be too familiar,—the consideration may be worth a thought, that they may diminish the force of this familiarity, almost to the extent of one-half, by the kept-up habit of preaching in two different styles.

And here will be the proper place to introduce the consideration of a question, already glanced at, namely, is the extemporaneous style within the compass of all preachers? Are there not instances, in abundance, of its baffling the endeavours of men, in other respects of the highest intellectual power? Does not one of Shakspeare's heroes tell us how he has seen "great clerks"

" Shiver and look pale ;  
Make periods in the midst of sentences ;  
Throttle their practised accents in their fear ;  
And, in conclusion, dumbly have broke off ?"

Did not Bishop Sanderson make the attempt, before a village audience, and, on the admission of all present,

exhibit a most mortifying and humbling failure? Did not Tillotson try his powers in the same way, and after beating and buffeting about for nearly ten minutes, to the great distress, both of himself and of his audience, bring his discourse to a close, declaring that nothing should induce him to make the attempt again? Nay, did not South, who was in the habit of committing his sermons to memory, on one occasion of trusting himself without his manuscript, break down in the very opening of his sermon, and, with the exclamation, "Lord, be merciful to our infirmities," descend abruptly from the pulpit?<sup>10</sup>

Yes, all these failed; and if any of us should content ourselves with the result of a *first* experiment, and that, perhaps, made when we had arrived at the years of middle life, it is more than probable that we should fail too.<sup>11</sup> But if these instances are cited to show that men are born with a special faculty of extemporaneous utterance, and that none can successfully attempt it, to whom this original gift has been denied, it seems obvious to ask, how do continental preachers attain to

<sup>10</sup> See *Quarterly Review*, Vol. cii., p. 491.

<sup>11</sup> Sheridan's first effort in the House of Commons was a complete failure,—so complete, that he was advised by his friends to abandon the idea of becoming a speaker. His answer to them has been often quoted. "Never! I know it is in me, and I am determined it shall come out." And it *did* come out. For, as will be remembered, after his speech upon Warren Hastings, Pitt moved an adjournment of the House, on the ground "that they could not come to a sober judgment, being so under the wand of the enchanter."

this practice? or the clergy of the Church of Scotland? or the great body of Nonconformist ministers, in our own country? That all these have derived, from nature, a peculiar talent for this purpose, will not be supposed for an instant. No; they know, from the first, that they shall be expected to preach extemporaneously, and therefore they spare neither pains nor diligence to perfect themselves in the art;—cultivating the voice, exercising the memory, practising themselves in the habit of free and unhesitating expression;—not looking upon fluency as a gift of nature, so much as a slow growth of experience and the reward of patient toil. “*Fit fabricando faber*” is their motto. If any spark of eloquence is to flash out from them, they look for it to come, not from the fire of inborn genius, but through habits of persevering application, and hard beating at the forge.<sup>12</sup>

On the supposition, then, that every man, of abilities sufficient to justify his entering the ministry at all, may attain to the power of extempore preaching, if he will,—what suggestions can be offered with a view to his attaining, in this practice, a tolerable degree of success? In the way of universally adapted directions, it may be confessed, the suggestions to be given are not many. The diversities and peculiarities of the

<sup>12</sup> Observe the words of a great authority upon this subject:—  
“*Maximus vero studiorum fructus est, et velut præmium quoddam amplissimum longi laboris, ex tempore dicendi facultas.*”—QUINCT.

human mind are almost infinite ; so that, assign the meed of preference to whatever practical method we may, we shall still feel the matter to be one, in regard to which we may take up the words of the Apostle, on another occasion, " Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, another after that."

Premising thus much, it may be permitted us to say, that all diversities of extemporaneous practice may be made to fall under one of the three following classifications ; namely, the *memoriter* method, the method of *short notes*, and the *self-reliant* method.

1. By the *memoriter* method, we shall be understood to speak of that kind of extemporaneous preaching, where the entire discourse is written, and committed to memory. The preacher may keep before him a tabular conspectus of the plan of the discourse, or he may not. If he use such an aid, it is probable that halting places will be noted down ; and the first words of sentences be as distinguishably marked, as an illuminator would mark the first letter, in a chapter of his missal, or as a lawyer would emphasise, by a larger character, the catch-word in a deed of trust. With or without these mnemonic aids, however, the whole discourse is an affair of rote. As a rule, nothing is attempted by memoriter preachers, which has not been thoroughly rehearsed beforehand ; and Shylock himself could not be more rigid in disallowing any matter, which was " not so written in the bond."



Now, laborious and intolerable as most of us are inclined to consider this practice, and calculated, as we should think also, to give an air of artificialness and constraint to the whole delivery, it is certain that some of our finest pieces of so-called extemporaneous oratory have been recited in this way,—that is, have been mere *written discourses learned by heart*. Thus, without going back to the times of the Fathers, when, as appears from Augustine, the practice was sometimes adopted,<sup>13</sup> we have, in later times, Bishop Hall declaring, “Never durst I climb into the pulpit to preach any sermon, whereof I had not before penned every word, in the same order wherein I hoped to deliver it.”<sup>14</sup> The same thing is related of Bishop Jewel. Whilst, in the proclamation of Charles the Second, to the University of Cambridge, before adverted to, it seems to be taken for granted, that, if a sermon were to be spoken without book at all, the *memoriter* method was the only one ever thought of:—“His majesty commands that the practice of reading sermons be laid aside; and that preachers deliver their sermons, both

<sup>13</sup> Speaking of the advantage to hearers of asking questions of the preacher, Augustine says, “Wherefore, they who get their sermon by heart, word for word, and so cannot repeat and explain a truth, until they see their hearers understand it, must lose one great end and benefit of preaching.” Fénelon’s Dialogues.

<sup>14</sup> Account of Himself, see Bridge’s Christian Ministry, ch. v., § 2.

in Latin and English, *by memory*, without books." In like manner, the stirring orations which have been preserved to us of the French pulpit, can hardly be looked upon as anything else than examples of clever recitation. The men had learned every word. "Which was the best sermon you ever preached?" some one once asked of Massillon. "That which I knew the best," was the significant reply. Indeed, of this celebrated preacher it is stated, that some of his best sermons were announced for repetition,—his admirers flocking to any new place, that they might hear some of his finer passages over again. Bourdaloue, with less perfect memory, felt himself obliged to fall in with the practice; although, through fear lest the sight of a congregation should make him forget his lesson, he was compelled to preach with closed eyes.<sup>15</sup>

So again, with regard to the clergy of the Scotch Church. Their extemporisings, it is well known, are nearly all rote-work. And the necessity for such a

<sup>15</sup> Yet Massillon himself forgot his lesson once, and was so discouraged by his failure, that he took to reading his sermons,—a resolution against which his eulogist thus remonstrates: "Nous osons n'être pas de son avis; la lecture forceroit l'orateur, ou à se priver de ces grands mouvements qui sont l'âme de la chair, ou à rendre ses mouvements ridicules en y donnant, un air d'apprêt et d'exagération qui détruiroit le naturel et la vérité." *Eloge de Massillon*, par M. D'Alembert.

practice is evidently deplored, by their best men, as a yoke even unto bondage.<sup>16</sup> For where the powers of memory are feeble, the defect will either shew itself in a hesitating and embarrassed manner, or else be covered over by artifices, which a Christian minister should be ashamed to employ.<sup>17</sup> Of course there are those, whose powers of memory are not feeble;—on the contrary, in the case of anything written by themselves, their memory is retentive to an extraordinary degree. The late Lord Macaulay could recite long pieces of his own, at a moment's notice, though written many years before;<sup>18</sup> whilst of Bishop Jewel, it is related, that, so easily could he remember what he had once written, that he only began to commit his sermon to memory, at the ringing of the bell for service. And, in the case of any, in whom the mnemonic faculty is thus strongly retentive,—and early cultivation with all of us would make it much more retentive than it is,—

<sup>16</sup> Campbell on Pulpit Eloquence, Lect. iv.

<sup>17</sup> “It is a very unseemly consequence of this over-strictness, in the Scotch Church,” says an eloquent modern writer, “that men not unfrequently make a desk of the Bible, and read the sermon stealthily, by slipping the sheets of it between the sacred leaves: so that the preacher consults his own notes, *on pretence* of consulting the Scriptures.” Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii., App., p. 381.

<sup>18</sup> Moore's Diary, quoted in the *Times*' review of Macaulay's *Miscellaneous Writings*.

we see not why, to begin with, at all events, they should not deliver their sermons *memoriter*. The habit of fluent speaking, which would be generated by first preaching from memory, would not altogether forsake us, when we come to have recourse to what, so far as relates to the language, is an unpremeditated address.

2. The next of the distinctive styles of extempore preaching we have to notice, and the one, under which is comprehended the greatest number of subordinate varieties, is that which we have called *the method of short notes*.

The practice itself is traced back, by Erasmus, to the time of Augustine, who, as he contends, adopted this plan, in his sermons upon the Psalms, and probably in his other sermons also. It was commended by Archbishop Secker, to his clergy, as a middle way between the written and the spoken styles; and combining, in some degree, the advantages of both. Bishop Bull, also, is much praised by Robert Nelson for his skill in this kind of preaching; as having the advantage of the popular style, though wanting the exactness of more studied compositions. As already hinted, however, there are numerous modes of using the method of short notes; and at a few of these it may be worth while to take a passing glance.

Thus one mode, given in a treatise before referred to, may be thus described. The sermon is fully written

out first, only with every alternate page left blank. On these blank pages, are jotted down the chief heads of thought, as contained in the written page, which is opposite. Then, having doubled down all the written pages, the preacher speaks from his abstract,—only falling back upon his full manuscript, when driven by stress of failure. This, of course, describes the earlier and learning processes of the plan. After a time, it is supposed that the fully written sermon may be dispensed with; and that, a habit of fluency and ease being acquired, the abstracts will become successively shorter and shorter, until they are at length brought down to a few capital heads.<sup>19</sup>

Another mode of preaching from short notes said to have been adopted by a late distinguished preacher, has been thus described to us. It consisted in the making of successively reduced abstracts of the discourse to be delivered,—the first sketch being almost a *complete* sermon; the second a *reduction*, but still indicating the chief lines of thought; until, by the time a fourth or fifth abstract had been arrived at, the compass of the sermon was brought down to the limits of a sheet of note-paper to be inserted in the leaves of the Bible.

There is one other modification of the 'short notes' method which we have known to be adopted by some preachers, and that with considerable success. We may call it the *symbolic* plan. In this case, the entire

<sup>19</sup> See Gresley's Eccles. Angl., Part IV., Let. 33.

sermon, so far as structure, order of thought, and chief forms of illustration are concerned, is *written*; but so reduced in compass, either by self-invented abbreviations, or by the omission of unimportant parts of sentences, as to admit of being preached from, like the abstract form, by means of a single inserted sheet in the Sacred Book. One advantage of this plan is, perhaps, that it seems to be more within the reach of the *many*,—of all, indeed, who are willing to give to it the requisite time and pains. For there is, in it, very little taxing either of memory, or of invention. The written notes are supposed to embrace all announcements of subject, all beginnings of paragraphs, all important verbalisms; so that nearly the whole catena of thought is represented upon paper, and the extemporaneous faculty is put into requisition, only to fill up the few omitted links. The plan will, probably, be embarrassing, for a time, and compel a more frequent glancing of the eyes towards the notes, than is consistent with the freedom of a spoken address. But this will wear off by practice. The great thing to acquire is confidence. The fear of falling once overcome, the wing, of itself, will soon take to bolder flights.

3. The last kind of extempore preaching we have to notice is that which we have called the *self-reliant method*;—or that, in which, without notes, or helps, or undergirdings of any kind, the man plunges into deep



water at once ; and that, too, if the bodily and mental functions be in healthy play, without much fear of mischance or failure.

It is a peculiarity of this style of extempore address, that it is adopted by the very *best* preachers, and by the very *worst*. Mediocrity, and very respectable mediocrity too, will take refuge in the other styles,—in the trusted strength of its memory, or in timid and cautious reliance upon its notes. The self-reliant method is for the extreme men, on either side. It is the strong arm of the mighty ; or the puny weapon of the feeble. It is the chosen resource of pains-taking, earnest, soul-loving zeal ; or the cheap expedient of laziness, and procrastination, and a fluent tongue. But with the abusers of one of God's noblest instruments for good,—the race of complacent mouthers, who, without an idea, without an argument, without an illustration or a fact, that seems pertinent to anything, can go on wearying their hearers with their inexhaustible talk,—we have not now to do. We are speaking of the weapon in its legitimate use, as being the normal type of all *true extempore speaking*, but which, while affording scope for the highest powers of intellect, demands premeditation, demands arrangement, demands unsparing pains of every kind in order to success.

What form this premeditation should take, would be a subject for a book, rather than for a paragraph. Indeed a book has recently appeared, on the continent,

offering suggestions for this kind of preparation in particular. The work is, perhaps, a little too French in its spirit and modes of thought for some of us; but it is one, which, we think, any intending extemporaneous preacher would consult with advantage.<sup>20</sup> The author's directions have respect to the following leading particulars. First, "The subject and its point," or the definite settlement, in our own minds of what the main scope of the discourse is to be. Next "the formation and arrangement of the ideas,"—a process answering to the painter's first sketch of his picture. Next "the adjustment and reduction" of these constituent elements, with a view to their right proportion and harmony, one with another. And, lastly, the preparation of a careful "exordium" and "peroration"—together with the fixing upon one or two *strong thoughts*, upon which, though still in subordination to a general plan, we should leave ourselves a license to enlarge.

Attention to these points, it will be seen, would tend to deliver us from some of the more conspicuous failures, observable in modern extempore preaching. Thus, to say nothing of the rule given to a preacher, that he have a distinct conception of his subject,—inattention to which may be a radical vice in his intellectual organization, and which would shew itself whether he spoke his sermons or wrote them,—how important

<sup>20</sup> The Art of Extempore Speaking, by M. Bautain. London, 1859.

is the recommendation to see that there be "harmony and proportion" in the several parts of a discourse? Is it at all an uncommon thing, to find that which constitutes the entire stress and marrow of a sermon,—which was intended so to be by the preacher, before he entered his pulpit,—crushed and squeezed into the end of the discourse, when all our best powers of attention are gone, and we are expectant of an early close? The reasons for a postponement of such important matter to the last may be various. The man has been afraid his materials would not hold out; and he has, purposely, lingered upon his secondary and collateral topics. Or he has overthought his subject, and finds himself with more matter than he is able to produce. Or a new idea has come up, in the course of delivery, and, following its impulse, he finds himself carried far off the line;—till, coming back again, he finds that his time is gone, though some of his best thoughts are yet to come. Any way, however, all that the hearer gets is a mis-shapen discourse. The parts are not proportioned to each other. Statement of subject, corroborative illustration, main argument, closing appeal, take the places of each other in violation of all symmetry. All the things, it is possible, may be in the discourse, but there is *no harmony*.

Nor less important, in extempore preaching, is the recommended attention to the "exordium" and "peroration" of a sermon;—to the latter especially. Who has

not witnessed the discomfiture and distress of a preacher, evidently most anxious to bring his sermon to a close, if he could but make up his mind as to the best way? Naturally wishful to make a graceful exit, and to round off his concluding period well,—as he draws towards the end, he is casting about, by all the aids of memory and invention, for some place of safe landing. But the ground favours him not. He cannot find a place for the sole of his foot. And so he has to go floundering on a little longer. At last, you think he is nearing *terra firma*. But again he has fears for his safety. And, while you are looking to see him touch the ground,—like a disengaged balloon, he shoots up into the air again,—only to make an awkward descent after all; and glad, if he can call in the aid of a text of Scripture, to cover a lame and impotent conclusion. Hence the advice commonly given by writers on this subject, that the peroration should be more carefully prepared than any other part of the discourse; that the matter, style, and even verbal form of it, should all be determined beforehand. And it should be delivered as it was determined,—without addition, without expansion, without change,—but in all its clean, poised, well-considered sentences,—as it left the mint of thought, or was taken down by the faithful pen.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See the advice of Whately on this subject. Rhetoric, part I., c. iv., § 3.

We must close this chapter by adverting to a few qualifications, which would seem to be generally necessary to success, in the practice of extemporaneous preaching.

Of these, the first is the cultivated habit of *facile and correct expression*.

It must be *facile*. There must be an easy and unembarrassed flow of words. The qualification has its counterfeit, as hinted already. And in the redundant outpourings, the drenching verbiage, the oppressive volubility of some speakers, we see what is commonly meant by a man having a great command of language, a phrase which, as has been wittily observed, means that his language has a great command of *him*.<sup>22</sup> The abuse of the power apart, however, the habit must be acquired of unhesitating expression,—of saying what we have to say easily. Writing to the father of Macaulay, on the oratorical training of the future historian, Lord Brougham said,—“Let him, first of all, learn to speak easily and fluently,—as well, and as sensibly, as he can no doubt,—but, at any rate, let him learn to speak. This is the first requisite, to acquire which everything else must be sacrificed.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Whately. In reference to this kind of fluency also, we have Lord Brougham saying, “It is a very common error to call this natural eloquence; it is the reverse; it is neither natural nor eloquent.”—*Edinburgh Review*.

<sup>23</sup> Published in *Times* newspaper, dated March, 1823.

But mere facility of expression is not all. There should be *correctness*, a ready appropriateness, that habit of felicitous diction, which enables a man, as it were, by an instinct, to put the right word in the right place. Of course, no rules can be given for the acquisition of such a habit. But, in regard to so much of skill in it, as comes of having at hand, always, a rich thesaurus of approximate synonyms, there is one coincidence of practice, between ancient and modern masters, which may not be deemed unworthy of notice. We allude to an acquired habit of ready and even off-hand translation of fine passages, out of one language into another. Cicero, Quintilian, and the younger Pliny, enjoin this practice, as indispensable to any proficiency in eloquence. Whilst of Cicero, it is related, in connection with those exercitations for declaiming practice, alluded to in a former chapter, that he more frequently declaimed in Greek than in his native tongue.<sup>24</sup> Now it is note-worthy, that Pitt was accustomed to attribute his remarkable felicitousness of expression to a similar practice. The account of the manner in which he set about it, is given by Lord Stanhope in his installation address at Aberdeen.<sup>25</sup> And through life he attached much importance to the practice, as appears from a remark he made to Lord Grenville, preserved among the recollections of the late Mr. Rogers. “‘ I

<sup>24</sup> Kennett's Essay on Roman Education, p. xxi.

<sup>25</sup> See Note in the Appendix.



have always thought,' he said, 'that what little command of language I have, came from a practice I had of reading off, in the family, after tea, some passage of Livy or Cicero.' He was constantly in the habit," adds Mr. Rogers, "of translating off-hand any passage from the classics."<sup>26</sup>

These instances, at all events, may not be without their use to those, who are apt to have an undervaluing estimate of classical studies, on the plea, that all that is worthy, in the great intellectual productions of antiquity, may be obtained through the medium of existing translations, without the trouble of making translations of our own. For it is by making translations of our own,—by the cultivated habit of comparing idiom with idiom, and by tracing out the subtle and refined distinctions between the modes of thought in one age, and the modes of thought in another,—that, not only are the great conceptions of great minds more surely mastered, and not only are these conceptions made by combination, the seed-plot of future thoughts of our own,—but a still further advantage of the process is, that, in this way, the mind learns to habituate itself to those delicate shades of verbal expression, which, whether in speaking or writing, form one of the greatest charms of eloquence, and are even one main element of perspicuity and power.

<sup>26</sup> "Recollections," by Samuel Rogers. London, 1859.

Another requisite to success, in extempore preaching, we have to notice, is the assiduous cultivation of the memory.

Against the drudgery of learning the entire sermon by heart, we have recorded a dissentient opinion already. But we did not thereby mean to commit ourselves to the admission, that, adopt whichever of the modifications of extemporaneous address we may, it was even possible for any great success to be achieved, without the mnemonic faculty being constantly employed,—and this, not only for the general scope and structure of the discourse, but for sentences, phrases, and, in many cases, for the retention and reproduction of the actual words. We are aware, it is customary to assume, that the blending together of prepared and extempore matter, is rarely attended with success; and that a transparent awkwardness will accompany the transition, from the chastened and classically moulded sentences of the study, to the chance-born and random utterances which the mind is obliged to furnish at the instant. But all experience is against this supposed incompatibility. The two things were always mixed up together, by the ancient orators;<sup>27</sup> and

<sup>27</sup> “*Mandare memoriæ*” is one of Cicero’s, “*quinque quasi membra eloquentiæ*;” yet it is certain he mixed much extempore matter with his orations. Of Demosthenes we are told that he neither wrote the whole of his orations, nor spoke without committing part to writing. Plutarch. . In vit.

the same thing is known to be practised now, by our best parliamentary and forensic speakers. In the letter of Lord Brougham, before adverted to, he says, "I composed the peroration of my speech for the Queen, twenty times over, at least;" whilst, in order to shew that he did not limit his remark to perorations merely, nor even to tyros merely, he adds, "I go further and say, even to the end of a man's life, he must *prepare, word for word, most of his finer passages.*"<sup>28</sup> To the same purport is what we are told of the practice of Robert Hall, who was never ashamed to confess that even to the very words he should use, his most powerful passages were prepared beforehand.<sup>29</sup> Cultivate therefore, the habit of unpremeditated expression as we may, we hold that, for the exordium, for a connected argument, for a well considered illustration, for a powerful close, we shall never be able to dispense with the aids of memory.

Our next suggestion, with regard to extempore preaching, has respect to the manner of speaking; to the necessity, especially under stress of difficulty, of

<sup>28</sup> Dr. Chalmers's journal contains such extracts as the following: "October 4, Employed in writing speech on Mr. Ferrier's case. October 6. Almost finished my speech on Ferrier's business. Oct. 8. *Committed great part of my speech to heart.*" Life by Dr. Hanna.

<sup>29</sup> Foster's Essay, Works, vol. vi. p. 156. See Appendix.

an equable and deliberate utterance. One of the first troubles experienced by a public speaker is to catch himself tripping. He has stumbled upon a wrong or inappropriate word; or he has expressed himself in a way which, almost before the words have fallen from his lips, he sees will lay his statement open to objection; or lastly, owing to some ill-managed qualifications in the middle of a sentence, he has let go the thread of his argument; and he sees nothing but an ugly *anacoluthon* before him—half the sentence unfinished, and the other half hanging upon nothing. These things greatly disconcert him. In the case of the unsuitable word or statement, he can hardly avoid, for the next few seconds, yielding to an undercurrent of speculation in his own mind, as to the extent of mischief his mistake may involve; and for a sentence or two he is considering whether he ought to go back and set it right. More commonly, however, the consciousness of dilemma betrays itself in increased rapidity of utterance; in an agitated impatience to get on to something else; as if he would hurry away from his misfortune, or bury it out of sight of his hearers, by an overlaid heap of words. It is almost needless to say, that, by such means, the evil is aggravated, and that the confusion will increase the longer he goes on.

Hence, whether in the way of prevention or cure, the best security for an orator, prone to get into trouble, is deliberation. And he should be the more

deliberate, the more troubled he is. It is by far the easiest way to recover himself; and what is of more importance, it is the honest way; whilst, if anything have dropped from his lips, which is really open to exception, a few qualifying words to set it right at the time, must be better than any raised mist of words under cover of which he is hoping the mistake may be overlooked.<sup>30</sup>

As to a discovered *anacoluthon*, involving no danger of misconception, but only a lost consecutiveness in the order of the speaker's thoughts, it seems better that a preacher should let it pass by, and suffer judgment to go by default. Under certain rhetorical conditions, we know this form of structural incoherence is allowable, and may even heighten the moral impression of an address. But, where it does not,—where it is an accident into which we have fallen unwittingly, or through suffering ourselves to be carried away by the vehemence of oratorical impulse, there should be no wasting of time to recover the lost clue; but rather an endeavour to get into a new sentence as soon as we can. Deliberate utterance will do much towards keeping us from these extemporaneous lapses, but like other lapses,—such as the mention of a wrong name, or misquoting the words of a text of Scripture, or even a violated

<sup>30</sup> Addison says of some speakers, "They put me in mind of the scuttle fish, that when he is unable to extricate himself, blackens all the water about him, till he becomes invisible." Spectator.

concord in grammar,—they will happen now and then. And when they do, we should neither betray confusion at discovering the error, nor waste time in trying to set it right. There must be, in extemporizing, a certain amount of *boldness*, and even *rash venture*. A man will never make a good speaker, who loses all his self-possession on finding that he has made a mistake.<sup>31</sup>

The last qualification for extempore preaching, we shall advert to, is the necessity, in order to anything of proficiency, of *habitual and careful writing*.

Among the ancients, this was strongly insisted upon. "The pen is the orator's best instructor,"<sup>32</sup> says Cicero. "Without this," says Quintilian, "public speaking

<sup>31</sup> How little is the practised parliamentary orator disconcerted by such things? Of Fox, we think, it is related, that in the course of a Latin quotation, on one occasion, he pronounced the 'i' in *vectigal* short. A low murmur of *vectigal* came from a member sitting near. Upon which the unabashed speaker exclaimed, "An hon. member reminds me of a false quantity made by me, in the quotation from Cicero. I thank him for it. It will afford the House an opportunity of hearing again that noble sentiment." And forthwith came out the quotation again, "*vectigal*" being enunciated with all its elongated honours. We do not desiderate for the preacher *quite* so much self-possession as this; because we suppose most of us would agree in describing it, as self-possession and *something more*.

<sup>32</sup> De Orator. And again, "Caput est quod (ut vere dicam) minime facimus (est enim magni laboris quem plerique fugimus) quam plurimum scribere."



becomes mere empty garrulousness.”<sup>83</sup> And they acted upon what they taught. Some of the preserved orations of Cicero were never delivered at all; and, of Servius Galba, it is related that, in preparing a speech, he would employ two or three amanuenses at once. Now the practical necessity of much writing, for an extemporaneous preacher, is, by some of our clergy, altogether denied. Their power of intellectual abstraction, they say, enables them to compose altogether mentally. They can revolve all the bearings of a text, as they recline back in their arm-chair; and turn out a finished homily in the course of a morning’s walk. Arrangement of materials is not so much to be regarded, they consider, as the necessity of having the mind full of its subject,—of having ample stores of mentally registered thoughts, upon the matter in hand, which we are to trust to the inspirations of the moment, to bring in at the right place. That argument, which occurred to us at the fireside,—or, that apt illustration, which flashed upon us, as we walked by the way,—we shall be able to bid it to our presence, when we are in the pulpit, and give it forth, with as much clearness, as if it had been written down.

Now it is of this last assertion, more particularly,

<sup>83</sup> “Sine hâc quidem conscientîâ (multum in rescribendo laborem insumpsisse) illa ipsa ex tempore dicendi facultas inanem modo loquacitatem dabit, et verba in labris nascentia.” Quinct, Lord Stanhope’s Discourse.

that we stand so much in doubt. We believe they are very few, who know what all the bearings of an argument will be, or how a mentally conceived illustration will work out, till they have put down their thoughts upon paper. There is a haziness, about those out-of-door conceptions, which the clearer medium of written thought would help to disperse ;—a want of exactness, in that arm-chair logic, which, patent enough as the pen would have made it to us, will, perhaps, only strike us, for the first time, when we come to deliver it aloud. Whatever else, therefore, may be necessary for the extempore speaker, we hold that, in order to correctness, he *must write*. It is not only because, without such aid, he will not be able to make *others* understand his meaning; it is that, without it, he cannot be sure that he understands it himself.

From all that has been advanced, it will be inferred, that what we regard, as the besetting danger of the extemporaneous preacher, is the neglect of needful preparation; the getting into a habit of mere word-stringing; the not being furnished with a store of well-defined and solid thoughts, and, therefore, being obliged to have recourse to the most feeble and wire-drawn generalities to fill up the time. In saying this, we are far from meaning that all the meagreness and superficialness are on *his* side. On the contrary, we know that there may be twaddle *written*, as well as twaddle *spoken*: and that a sermon, demanding many

hours for the mere manual writing, may, after all contain nothing but stones of emptiness, sounding brass, and bones that are very dry. But still, the temptation to provide only barren pastures, lies more with the extempore preacher. He is liable to fall in, more easily than the writer of sermons, with the suggestions of an indolent spirit. If he have but the trick of fluent declamation; the power of concealing any poverty of thought, by means of a thick mist of words; and, worst of all, that dreadful habit, which some are said to have, of appearing most animated and earnest, when most conscious that they have nothing to say,—we have no security, but in his own conscience, that we may not, at any time, be called upon to sit down to an empty board. And we cannot contemplate this danger without solemn sadness,—without warning those who may have fatal facilities this way, whither Satan and their fluent gifts may lead them. They may tell us that, in their most indolent or indisposed moods, they are always careful to redeem time for prayer. And we may not doubt this. But the marvel to us is that, having found time for prayer, they did not learn, *by prayer*, the mockery of not finding time for something else. “This ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”

Wherefore, let our last protest, on this subject, be against hasty preparation. The cheaply-produced sermon, whether spoken or written, is always the same,

a calamity, a wrong, an offence both to earth and heaven. It is not only that there is the absence of the true Araunah spirit, in the offering. There is an evil beyond that. That which costs us nothing,—in the way of disappointment, and distress, and famine of the word, may cost our hearers a great deal. They come to us not as to “instructors in Christ” only, but as to “fathers;”—fathers, charged with the distribution of heaven’s bounty, and, having at our disposal, bread enough and to spare. Is it nothing that we spread for them a table of empty husks? “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?”

## CHAPTER X.

## SUPPLEMENTAL TOPICS.—CONCLUSION.

Expository preaching—Its relative advantages—Difficulties of the style—Courses of sermons—Usually attractive—Helpful to enlarged views of theology—Public catechizing—Ancient authority of—The benefits to the adult members of a congregation—Its supposed difficulties—Sermons to children—The choice of subjects most suitable for—Illustration the great instrument for teaching the young—Necessity of preparation—Open-air preaching—The lawfulness of it—Supposed danger of bringing religion into ridicule—Liability to open challenges from the unbeliever—Needed cautions—Special services for the working classes—The Sunday evening services in cathedrals, &c.—Week-day services in parish churches—How to keep up the interest of special services—Conclusion.

THE practical aim of the present work, and the desire to incorporate into it as much of the fruits of gathered experience, as a large and important sphere of ministry might be expected to supply, will be accepted as a reason for the mention of a few supplemental topics, which, though belonging to the

general subject, did not seem to fall under any of those capital divisions of it, which have formed the ground-work of the preceding chapters.

Of such topics, the first we may advert to, is that of

#### EXPOSITORY PREACHING.

By an expository discourse, we mean generally, a discourse, of which the basis of illustration is laid in larger portions of Scripture, than is commonly used to introduce the ordinary sermon,—whether by taking a parable, or miracle, or a striking passage of sacred biography, or, it may be, the consecutive portions of an entire book of Scripture. It is the more ancient mode of preaching, no doubt. We should look, in vain, for the original of our modern topical sermon, in the preaching of Ezra, or in the discourses of Jeremiah, or in the sermon of St. Paul at Antioch, or even in the best homiletical examples, bequeathed to us by the primitive Church. In the first Christian centuries, the homily was *the rule*,—the discourse on a set topic the exception; the general preference being for a mode, in which, as St. Chrysostom observes, “God speaks much, and man little.”

With us, however, the sermon has been too long established, and has taken too deep a root in our church-going partialities, to be superseded by the ex-



position ; or even to allow of the latter taking, with it, more than an occasional turn. To say nothing of its advantages over the exegetical method, in the larger scope it affords for the connected argument, the eloquent illustration, the impassioned appeal,—it is felt that some of our most able and skilfully condensed tractates, upon theological subjects, have come to us in this form. If our divines had always been limited to the expository method, such sermons as those of Barrow, on the Apostles' Creed ; or those of Bishop Butler on Human Nature ; or those of Charnock on the Attributes, might never have been written :—certainly would never have been preached. And though we look not for the like of such men, in every generation, yet disquisitions on set religious topics are a needful part of the religious training of the age ; and, by no way better than by the sermon, can this admitted need be supplied.

And yet many and great are the advantages of the exposition, when permitted to take its share, with the sermon, in the building up of a congregation. To the preacher, it may be very beneficial. It furnishes him with a new variety of pulpit address. It compels him to a more accurate and synthetical study of large portions of the word of God. It spares him all the hesitation, and indecision, and loss of time, often attendant upon the choice of a text. And, above all, it keeps him from being too much wedded to the narrownesses

of human systems, by the fuller conspectus he is obliged to take of the whole counsel of God.

To the people, also, the style has many advantages. It brings before them a larger field of Divine truth at one view. It affords them a better opportunity for seeing the doctrines of the Christian system, in their related order and dependence. It admits of the bringing in of many collateral, but still far from unimportant topics, which, if left for a set subject of discourse, might never have been enforced at all. It helps to fix marked passages of Scripture more permanently upon the memory. And it assists them in the formation of devout and intelligent habits, in their own private reading of the word.

But is expository preaching easy? In some hands, and following some methods, it is easy enough. If a preacher is content merely to decompose each verse into its constituent parts; to single out the particular expressions upon which he knows he can expatiate most easily; to expound the first clause, and the second, and the third, as if there were no connection or bond of subject between them; in a word, if he has only taken a long passage of Scripture, because, with such a mass of materials, he thinks his cup of invention is not likely to run dry; or because, if he finds he has not enough to say upon one verse, he has nothing to do but to seek refuge in another,—if, in this way, a man sets about expository preaching, his task, no

doubt, will be attended with little difficulty, but, it is to be feared, with as little profit too.

Let it be observed, then, that there is nothing of the save-trouble principle, in this style, if it is to be well done. It requires a pains-taking process of generalization ; a skilled habit of separating all mere accessories from what we consider to be the parent thought ; a discriminative grouping of scattered elements, to make them bear on some one conclusion ; and a facile power of transition, from one part of the subject to another, without the jarring sense of abruptness, and without injury to the general unity of the subject. It is customary to speak of Chrysostom, as the most perfect model of this style of preaching. But our own puritan writers excelled much in this kind of composition also. Fanciful, far-fetched, tiresome beyond all endurance, may be their 'inferences' five, and their 'observations' seven, with sundry 'questions' and 'answers' stopping the way between, but 'what is the chaff to the wheat?' And much wheat may be found in these uninviting pages. For power to seize on the salient moral of a passage, or to pick up the interlacing threads of several verses, and combine them into one strand of thought, the preachers of the period referred to are surpassed by few. Writers, like Manton on St. James, or Adams on St. Peter, or Greenhill on Ezekiel, or Caryl on Job, will rarely be consulted by the expository preacher without profit. As greatly helpful to his purpose, also,

especially in affording examples of devout application, as well as dexterous and able grouping, he will not overlook the commentaries of Matthew Henry, and the pious Burkitt.

With regard to the application of the expository method, to entire books of Scripture, by taking consecutive portions, as the subject of each lecture, we may observe that, except in the case of some of the shorter books or epistles, the plan is not one, which our experience would incline us to favour. There is danger of it becoming a yoke, even unto bondage, to the preacher,—coming, as he must sometimes, to passages, upon which, in the way of exposition, there is, in fact, nothing to be said. Whilst, as to hearers, with all their partiality for lectures, succeeding in regular course, they have their stern limits for the length of the series; and, these exceeded, their impatience soon discovers itself for something new.

The last remark may not unfitly introduce the mention of another supplemental topic; namely, that of

#### COURSES OF SERMONS.

As already hinted, if the series extend not to too great a length, there can be no doubt of these having

considerable attractions for the great majority of our congregations. Presuming upon something of unity and continuity in the series, they are unwilling, even by a single absence, to lose the connecting thread. And, in the case of courses of lectures, which are intended to follow men into the familiar walks of life, and to exhibit their relative obligations, one to another, in their tangible, concrete, household form,—such, for example, as a series of discourses on the domestic relations, founded upon the latter chapters of the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians; or a course on Gospel ethics, founded on the passage, commencing, “Whatsoever things are true,” in the Epistle to the Philippians,—we have known a degree of interest to be awakened, which would have been looked for, in vain, from any promiscuous or unconnected teaching.

Nor does this seem to be the only advantage of the method. The fact that we are going through a course upon specific topics,—the entire discourse, perhaps, hinging upon a single word,—will prepare people for our entering into minute shades of detail; for an assumed license to adopt an exceptional homeliness of illustration; and altogether for our standing less in awe of any trespass against pulpit dignity, than we may deem it expedient to do in the ordinary discourse. Many years ago, we remember to have heard a very able divine, a preacher at one of our chief Inns of Court, offer an

apologetic explanation to his learned auditory, for having, as they complained, been somewhat too outspoken upon the subject of sins against the seventh commandment. We will not say whether it was wise to offer the explanation; but we have the fullest confidence, that, if the sermon complained of had formed one of a series of discourses on the Decalogue, the remarks, which provoked the explanation, would never have been made.<sup>1</sup>

Not less obvious is it to remark, how helpful the occasional use of the plan under consideration, may be made towards the better instruction of our people in systematic theology, or, at least, in a more systematic understanding of some one or other of its departments. What a connected and comprehensive view of the duty of prayer, for instance,—its nature, its object, its subject-matter, its order of asking,—may be furnished, in a series of discourses on the form, prescribed by our Divine Lord on the Mount. How clearly would the

<sup>1</sup> Professor Blunt hints that we may have a like security against offence-taking, in treating upon unwelcome subjects, by taking our text for them, from some part of the service for the day. An anecdote of the late Duke of Wellington would tend to confirm this remark. Some one had commented, on coming out of church, on the bad taste of the clergyman, who, with a knowledge that the Duke would be present, had taken his text from the descriptive account of Naaman (2 Kings v. 1). Upon which the Duke made answer, "Nonsense; it was the Lesson for the day."



essential oneness of Old and New Testament theology,—the one Lord, the one faith, the one baptism,—be brought out in a course of sermons, on St. Paul's great cloud of witnesses. What a finished portraiture of Christian character may be supplied by successive meditations on the Beatitudes; and how complete a view of our work and warfare in the world, might be presented, as, piece by piece, we laid open the equipments of the Christian soldier, wrestling against the powers of evil, by “putting on the whole armour of God.”

But systematic theology may be taught in another way; in a way which, it were much to be wished, we could see more extensively adopted. We allude to preaching, by means of

#### CATECHIZING IN THE CHURCH.

The authority of the Christian catechesis dates as far back, as the second chapter of St. Luke:<sup>2</sup> whilst, of the importance in which it was held in the first Christian centuries, we require no other proof than the fact, that the duty of conducting it,—or of seeing that the converts, to be baptized, were duly instructed in the

<sup>2</sup> Comp. ἐπερωτῶντα αὐτοῦς in Luke ii. 46, with συνειδήσεως αγαθῆς ἐπερώτημα in 1 Pet. iii. 21.

elementary principles of Christian truth,—should be made to devolve on an officer of the Church, named and set apart for that special purpose.<sup>3</sup> The basis of catechetical instruction, also, as consisting of expositions of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments,—the *credenda*, the *postulanda*, the *agenda*,—has never materially varied. The practice was much neglected in the dark ages of popery, our homily tells us, but, with better days, it revived. And one of the first steps taken towards the Reformation," says Archbishop Secker, in this country, was a "general injunction that parents and masters should first learn themselves, and then instruct their children, and servants, in these three great branches of Christian duty, as set forth in the Catechism."<sup>4</sup> With the peremptory language of our 59th Canon, we are all familiar. And the neglect of such a plain injunction

<sup>3</sup> According to St. Ambrose, St. Mark himself was the first catechist at Alexandria, having been ordained to that office by St. Peter. See Dean Comber's Companion to the Temple. The Catechism, Part III., vol. iii., p. 439. Ox., 1841.

<sup>4</sup> "Even Luther," says old Fuller, "did not scorn to profess himself a scholar of the Catechism. By this catechizing the Gospel got ground of popery; and let not our religion, now grown rich, be ashamed of that which first gave it credit, and set it up, lest the Jesuits beat us at our own weapons. Through the want of this catechizing, many, who are well skilled in some dark out-corners of divinity, have lost themselves in the beaten road thereof."

can only be accounted for, on the supposition, that the instruction which the canon required to be given in the church, is now given in the parochial school. This supposition, however, seems to overlook the important fact, that public catechizing is not for the benefit of the children of the poor only, nor even for the exclusive benefit of *children* at all. A benefit it is, to our parochial children, no doubt, and a very great one; for there is nothing they remember so well, as knowledge obtained through answers given by themselves. And many a simple explanation of their own will be remembered, when a wise explanation of ours will be forgotten. But it is a great benefit to others also;—to the children of the wealthier members of our congregations, who should always be encouraged to take part in these catechetical exercises; and still more to the illiterate and simple-minded adult, who is often glad to receive instruction in this form, although, if broken up into such very small particles for himself, he would only be offended by the condescension.

Still the great use of this kind of teaching is, that it should proceed upon a *plan*; that there should be an orderly sequence in the method of instruction; beginning with the obligations of the baptismal vow, and ending with the privileges of full communion with the Church. In the way of a clear and connected view of the whole Gospel scheme, it is to be feared we take it for granted, that our people know a great deal more

than they do. They may have a correct understanding of isolated doctrines of the faith,—our guilt and ruin by the fall, our recovery and salvation through the Christian covenant, our admission by baptism into the family of God, our justification by faith in the merits of Christ Jesus, our renewal unto holiness by the influences of the Holy Spirit, and, as the fruit and evidence of all, a conversation which is according to godliness,—but, of the relation of these truths, one to the other, and of their coherence, as one compact whole of Divine philosophy,—it may be believed, that their views are anything but clear, and anything but perfect. “Baxter was amazed,” we are told, “at the lamentable ignorance of numbers of persons who had been regular attendants at his church, for ten or twelve years, and who yet, in one hour’s familiar instruction, seemed to learn more than in all their previous lives.”<sup>5</sup> Insomuch that, when he was advanced in years, we find him writing, “Now it is the fundamental doctrines of the Catechism, which I highest value, and daily think of, and find most useful to myself and others. The Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments find me now the most acceptable and plentiful matter for all my meditations.”<sup>6</sup>

Among the causes which have led to the neglect of catechizing, we nothing doubt may be mentioned a current belief, that a peculiar faculty is required for

<sup>5</sup> *Quarterly Review*, vol. cii. p. 485.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* p. 483.

drawing out the powers of the youthful intelligence ; that it is not every man, who can throw himself back into the mental processes of childhood, and look into the busy hives of thought before him, as if himself were young again ; in a word, a lurking idea that chatechizing is a *gift*. We believe it to be just as much a gift as *swimming* is a gift. And that in the one, as in the other, it is competent to most of us to succeed, if we will but try. As parochial ministers, we are accustomed, it is presumed, sometimes to take a class in our schools. We know what methods we are in the habit of adopting, with children there ;—how we lay ourselves out to stimulate and exercise their powers of reflection and thought ; how we lead up by faintly indicated lines, to the answer we are seeking ; how we avoid those ambiguously-worded questions, which may be rightly answered in more ways than one ; how we never have recourse to a remote analogy, when we can find one to our purpose under their own eyes ; how we try to bring out what they *know*, rather than mortify them by a discovered *ignorance* ; how we proceed onwards from their last answer, as if they had supplied us with a new form of illustration ; and how we keep working, round and round, to bring them to a conclusion,—taking care, meanwhile, so to make use of their words and replies, as that the conclusion shall seem to be their own. Most of us, we say, can do this. And yet, what is the overlaid or incorporated element of the Public Cate-

chizing, which is to make the same thing difficult in the church, that we find perfectly easy in the school? Why manifestly only that which is to bring the catechetical exercise so much nearer to the sermon;—namely, the interweaving of those larger moral applications which are often the more impressive to the general auditory, because purposely made to arise out of answers given by the children. For it thus seems as if God were ordaining strength “out of the mouth of babes and sucklings,” and the child is made the preacher to the man.

And this feature of the exercise it is, that gives to catechizing its chief usefulness and worth. It should be considered by us as *preaching*; made use of as preaching; prepared for as preaching. The illustrative simile, the close appeal to the conscience, the well pointed lesson of practice,—ought all to be thought out beforehand, as much as if they were intended for a sermon. There should be no attempt to hide the fact, that, besides doing good to the children, we have an ulterior object,—that we have a deliberate design of siege upon the citadel of the adult heart, and are employing the children to work in the trenches. If the benefit to the children were the *only* thing considered, we might obtain it in the school. We carry on the exercise in the presence of a congregation, because the method supplies us with another variety of teaching for a class, who, though not more than “children



in understanding," yet, in any other exercise than this, would expect to be addressed as men. "Be it so," we say, in the words of the Apostle in another case, "I did not burden you : nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile."<sup>7</sup>

Nearly allied to catechizing, and, with a like double aspect as to the persons to be benefited, is another form of preaching, to which experience has led us to attach some importance. We allude to

#### SERMONS TO CHILDREN.

Apart from considerations arising out of the overlength of our morning service,—at least, for those of tender age,—it will probably be conceded that, from sermons, in the style usually addressed to educated congregations, children, between the ages of six and twelve years, carry very little away. The music, and other adjuncts may keep the service from being a weariness ; and it is a clear gain, to have cultivated, in them, a sentiment of reverence for holy things. But the actual amount of pulpit instruction they take in, must be very unsatisfactory, and very slight. Is it not well, then, that they should sometimes have a service for themselves ? consisting, say, of the Litany,

<sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 16.

a hymn, and a sermon,—all being brought within the limits of an hour. As far as the results of a single ministry are admissible evidence, on the utility of such services, and, as far as the beneficial character of such results can be inferred,—either from the numbers who are present, or the sustained attention which is manifested, or the pleased interest with which the recurrence of the quarterly service is looked forward to,—the testimony of the writer of these pages would be unqualified and unhesitating. Including parents, and others above the age of those, for whom the service was specially intended, he thinks he may say he has sometimes had an auditory of a thousand persons, attracted by the announcement of a ‘sermon to children.’<sup>8</sup>

The comparative rareness of the practice, here recommended, may be allowed, in excuse of a few further remarks upon the best methods of its application. The most important part, as it seems to us, lies in the choice

<sup>8</sup> The author is most unwilling to occupy any part of his pages, even under the sheltering obscurity of a note, with references to his own ministrations. But as one instance, at all events, of the benefit resulting from sermons to children, he may be permitted to refer to the little biographical memoir, entitled “The Bud of Promise,” by the Rev. D. Pitcairn. The successive outlines of the sermons as given (pp. 22 to 28) in that Memoir, were written, or rather dictated by the child, at the successive ages of *six, seven and a half*, and *eight* years of age. The sermons were delivered eighteen years ago, and the author has continued the practice ever since.

of subject. This we consider ought, as a rule, either to be severely and strictly 'topical,'—that is bearing upon the expansion of some single idea,—or else verging towards the other extreme of 'exposition:' the excluded class of subjects being those which form the staple of our ordinary discourses,—namely those, in which, whether by the analytic or synthetic method, we *make* a unity out of the several clauses of a verse.

Of course, no absolute rule is intended. But it will be obvious, that our chief instrument, in operating upon the young mind, is *illustration*, whether by means of allegory, or anecdote, or picture drawing, or photographic sketches of things, which if the eye does not see every day, the imagination will be at no loss to clothe with life and form. And for this, the two descriptions of subject, we have referred to, afford peculiar facilities. In the topical discourse, for instance, where we have only our one thought to develope,—such as repentance, faith, providence, gospel, redemption, death, or judgment to come,—we take the shortest text we can find. The immediate connection of this explained, our sword-arm is set free. The whole field of analogy is before us; and we select whatever is best for our purpose. Suppose the intercession of Christ to be our subject. How easy to think of circumstances, in which we all want a *friend*, whether to obtain a favour, or avert an evil, or to conciliate one who is justly displeased with us. How easy to go further, and speak of friends, who,

with all their willingness to help us, are not sure they shall be able to prevail. And then might come popular illustrations from well-known pictures, or passages in history,—such as the family of Cromwell interceding for the life of Charles, or Jeannie Deans pleading for her sister with Queen Caroline,—all helping to keep the powers of the youthful intelligence from flagging; and, at the same time, preparing the mind to understand, to appreciate, to welcome with sacred gladness, the announcement, “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

Still more easy, for the purposes of a juvenile address, are those subjects which embrace a wider range of Scripture topic;—such as the life of an eminent saint; or an incident of Old Testament history; or a passage in the missionary life of St. Paul; or one of the miracles and parables of our Lord and Saviour. Here the originating faculty is scarcely tasked at all. Books of sacred biography have so multiplied, in our literature, that we may draw a Scripture character to the life. The lands of the Bible have been travelled over so often, that we may describe, accurately, the chief tracks, hallowed by the footprints of the Divine Redeemer; whilst the light thrown upon the sacred record, by ancient monuments, and the still surviving Eastern usage, and the traditions of the Asiatic mind derived from an unknown past,—will all help to enlarge the pictorial resources of the preacher, to an almost un-

limited extent, and enable him to keep up the moving panorama to the last.

Admitting the desirableness, however, of having sermons to children, we can believe the plea, for not having them will be urged, by many, of a conscious and proved inaptitude for such a kind of preaching. In this excuse, we should propose, instead of inaptitude, to read uncultivated faculty, insufficient preparation, or any other form of equivalent, for that strange unreasonableness, which expects profit without proportionate labour, or looks to reap, where there has been nothing sown. No doubt the failures in addresses to children, are more frequent than the successes. But most commonly, as we believe, from one cause. The men have never laid themselves out to succeed. They have thought that the process of descending to the lower ledges of childish thought, must follow the facile law of other descents; have allowed themselves to imagine that the entire difficulty was a mere affair of the spelling-book; and that, if they only kept from the use of any long or hard words, they might be quite sure of being understood. But no supposition can be more fallacious than this. If the line of thought be simple, and the method of illustration lively, and the images, and appeals, and arguments, be all in unison with the mental habitudes of childhood,—the preacher of a sermon to children may be betrayed into the use of a hard word, here and there, with very little prejudice to the

understanding of his subject, and with none whatever to the general interest of his address. But let this special adaptation to the mental organization of the young be overlooked, and what will be the consequence? why the speaker will not have gone on far, before, on the countenances of all present, will be seen nothing but blank, vacant, uneasy, listlessness. He perceives that, with all his picking of "small words," he is too high for them. He has been putting matured thoughts into children's language. And the things agree not together, any more than would a piece of new cloth when sewed on to an old garment. And so, in despair, he betakes himself to the other extreme;—tasks his inspiration to supply him with some extemporaneous juvenilities; when, in all probability, he will stumble upon illustrations, intellectually on a par with those of 'the indestructible primer,'—to the wonderment, it may be, of the very infantile section of his auditory, but to the offended and sublime disgust of every child above six years of age.

To come down to the intellectual processes of children, therefore, we repeat is no '*facilis descensus.*' A man must read books for it; study minds for it; write carefully for it. He may dispense with his manuscript in delivery; but he will not, in preparation, do wisely to dispense with his pen. Especially should he guard against being *too* juvenile. Children are more sensitive, even than the poor, to condescensions of this



sort. And, therefore, in preparing his subject, the preacher should have before him some model-mind. A sermon addressed to the average intelligence of children, say at the age of eight years, would take in as wide a range of mental sympathies, on either side the line, as sermons of this kind are expected to influence. Such sermons, judiciously managed, will interest others besides children;—especially the *poor*, who always like illustrative preaching better than any other; and *parents*, who are not sorry, by means of these addresses, to learn how to become teachers themselves.

Having reserved, for consideration in this chapter, a variety of miscellaneous topics, it may be permitted us here to make one or two remarks upon another class of special sermons, namely—

#### SERMONS PREACHED FOR CHARITABLE OCCASIONS.

Whether our congregations will ever return to the primitive practice, enjoined by the Apostle upon the churches of Corinth and Galatia, namely, that of laying by for an offertory, on “the first day of the week,” a stated portion of their substance “according as God had prospered them;”<sup>9</sup> or whether, if such practice should be universally revived, we should be able to dispense entirely with our present practice of having

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 1.

collection sermons,—may be a matter not easy to determine. At present, such sermons appear to be a necessity. And, whether their object be to promote the work of foreign missions, or to strengthen and enlarge the operations of our church at home, or to provide for the religious instruction for the children of the poor, or to advance any one of those multitudinous agencies which have sprung up so rapidly under the fertile invention of a philanthropic age,—whatever the object be,—we find it frequently charged upon us, by the laity, that we are guilty of one grave fault,—namely, that to a detailed enforcement of the claims of some charitable institution, we all but sacrifice the entire Sunday's teaching. And, we fear, the complaint is not without foundation. Who has not been in despair of having a sermon, which is likely to “minister grace unto the hearers,” on seeing the advocate for some Missionary society, for instance, place, by the side of his cushion, that bundle of papers,—of irregularly protruding edge, and careful elastic ligament,—from which, we know, he will continue his heavy readings till the clock strikes, even if we could be quite sure of his stopping then? Or who, when the object to be pleaded for is some institution at home,—a hospital, an asylum, a new church in some destitute locality, or a reformatory for the gathering in of the outcasts,—has not known what it is to grow weary under the recital of statistics, and financial summaries, and tables of com-

pared results,—aggregates of figures which no memory could carry to the end of the sermon, and which would have no influence whatever upon the collection, if it could ?

‘No influence upon the collection,’ we observed ; for as conducive to such ends, chiefly, we may presume, it is, that any good man deprives himself of a great opportunity, by taking up the larger part, even of a single sermon, with so much of detailed particulars, touching the cause for which he has undertaken to plead. Yet we speak with unhesitating confidence, in averring, that if, at the close of an edifying sermon, upon any point of Christian faith or practice, he had given five minutes to a general view of the object to be recommended—leaving all details to be brought out on the platform, or in the printed report,—he would have wrought quite as powerfully upon the liberal sympathies of his audience, and have done far more good to their souls. Even the selection of some cognate or distantly-related text,—a text, which, in its obvious applications, will conduct us, by easy stages, to the subject we are to introduce at the close,—is very far from being a necessity. As falling in with a proposed and expectant condition of mind, on the part of the hearers, there may be something desirable in such a choosing. But in pleading for a familiar charity,—a school, a dispensary, a district visiting society,—any ordinary subject of discourse, however foreign from the

announced object of the collection, will, for the most part, serve every purpose. At all events, by selecting a topic of spiritual profit, our own consciences will be most at ease. The command laid upon us, when we enter the pulpit is not to ‘preach the *charity*,’ but to ‘preach the *Word*.”<sup>10</sup>

But a work, professing to rest its claims for acceptance, chiefly on the ground of its practical purpose, can hardly be concluded, without notice of some of those abnormal efforts, which modern zeal has had recourse to, in order to work upon the conscience of the uneducated masses. We have been writing a book upon what should be said to people when they are assembled in our churches, but, as a living prelate well asks, ‘What if the people will not come?’<sup>11</sup> The inquiry may allow room for a few remarks, first, on what is called

<sup>10</sup> The fault, referred to in the text, is one especially complained of by those who are accustomed to spend a few weeks, in the summer, at the sea side, or some place of popular resort. They do not complain that the clergyman, at a watering-place, should be anxious to turn his *season* Sundays to a good account, by filling them up with a goodly number of charitable appeals. Visitors are the right people to ask for such form of assistance. And to ask it, when through the mercy of Providence their own bodily health is being invigorated, is to ask it at the right time. But missions, churches, schools, provident societies,—they have run the gauntlet of all these, probably, just before they left home. And they are not prepared for a twice-told tale so soon.

<sup>11</sup> Bishop of London’s Charge, 1858, p. 78.

## OPEN-AIR PREACHING.

Under certain limitations, we avow ourselves as not unfriendly to this expedient. We had begun it ten years ago, when, as yet, it was unfamiliar; and a reputed offence against dignity; and a thing for all sedate people to shake their heads at—heads full of all kinds of dark surmises, as to “where-unto this would grow.” And one doubted whether it came within the permissions of the law. And another, in fear of our being met with mocking contempt, quoted high authority for the inexpediency of “giving that which is holy unto dogs.” And another could see nothing but visions of an unseemly hustings brawl,—the messenger of God’s truth made to stand up before a multitude, and engage in fierce and loud contention with the Mormonite in his filthy theology, or the atheist in his blaspheming creed. Experience has dissipated nearly the whole of these misgivings. The entire question, in its relations to the civil as well as the ecclesiastical laws of the country, was discussed, with his accustomed research and acuteness, by one of our chief pastors; and the lawfulness of open-air services established beyond controversy.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The only canons which bear upon the subject, it is argued, are the 14th, 36th, and 72nd, and by these, services out of the church, at which the whole liturgy would not be used, are canonical, by the permission of the Bishop. It is further shown that there is no contravention of the Acts of Uniformity. Charge of Bishop of Winchester, 1854. Hatchard, pp. 24—29.

Neither was it found, at least within certain parochial limits, and where the clergyman's influence had made itself felt, that there was any disposition, in these street throngs, to cast ridicule on holy things. On the contrary, the author has witnessed, for the most part, on behalf of the crowd, (and he has had around him, as many as from four to five hundred in number), the utmost reverence and decorum. A respectful passage was always made for his approach. A body-guard of known parishioners formed a circle around his pulpit. And any attempt at ridicule or irreverence,—rarely proceeding from anybody but noisy boys,—was instantly put down by the people themselves. The last only of the three forms of danger, above referred to,—that of challenged discussion,—has been proved to have any substantial existence. And, in open and promiscuous thoroughfares,—where there is no bond of parochial unity in the persons assembled, and where, of course, the parish clergyman has no more influence than any other man,—it is, we fear, an inevitable result, that the preacher should be challenged to open discussion with the infidel;<sup>13</sup> and that, too, in a way, which, without supposing any disqualification on the part of the preacher, might be attended with hurt to the cause of true religion. On our own proper ground, however,

<sup>13</sup> See Report of the London Diocesan Home Mission, p. 10, where, however, the Coryphæus of infidelity seems to have taken little by his provoked passage-at-arms.



experience has taught us, that there is little fear of such results. Men who, from never being at home on the week-day, and never at church on the Sunday, may not know us *personally*, yet, on the report of their wives and children, know *about* us; and, as we have ourselves experienced, are prepared to resist, even unto force, any interruptions of us in a work, which, whatever their sympathy with it, is felt to be undertaken for their good.

On the best mode of making use of this instrumentality, in neighbourhoods which may seem to require it, we have not much to offer. We attach great importance to the observance of as much of outward order as possible;—the canonical habit, the neatly constructed pulpit, the secured presence of some one to lead the singing,—in order that nothing but walls and roof should be wanting, to give a reality to the service; and that nothing should be found, in its accessories, which could either justify or provoke a smile. That a dispensation, large, and almost unlimited, must be granted, from many of the rules for preaching, laid down in the former part of this work, will be seen at once. Not, however, from a *premeditated plan*, ought we to be absolved, even here. As compared with what might be demanded for the ordinary exercises of the Church, there may be more of fervour in the appeals, and more of boldness in the images, and more of disjointedness in the thoughts,—in the outward acces-

sories of delivery may be more of unchastened action, and, in the tone and spirit, more of emotion and depth and fire ;—but the solid matter must be there ; and the just reasoning must be there ; and the man who, from sheer indolence, leaves out these, has no right to expect a blessing. People will not ‘dance’ to such ‘piping.’ It was not this they “went out into the wilderness to see.” They may go home, applauding the goodness of his intentions, but they cannot feel that they are much the better for his pains.

Supplementary to open-air preaching, and, as a further effort towards bringing the masses under the regular and direct teaching of the Church, has been the more recent introduction of

#### SPECIAL SERVICES FOR THE WORKING CLASSES.

We do not wish to speak of the benefit resulting from this novel effort, as being wholly without its drawbacks. That many, on the Lord’s day, should forsake the calm sobriety of their accustomed places of worship, for the novelty of the concert-hall, or the gorgeous attractions of the cathedral ; that the best places, for hearing, should be occupied by persons, for whom the services were never intended ; that the lines of approach to the great centres of worship, should have been more than usually crowded with vehicles ; and,

what is even more to be regretted, that the public-houses, in the neighbourhood, should have been crowded too,—are results, which we can only be reconciled to, by the thought of an overbalancing and certain good. And this we may claim for the movement. The turning, to such noble uses, the dome and nave of our great metropolitan temples; the giving a new impetus and direction to the entire preaching power of the country; the conviction, carried home to the hearts of millions of the sons of toil, that they are *not* uncared for;—that the wealthy, and intelligent, and pious of our land, do *not* shut themselves up in the narrow enclosure of their class-sympathies, saying, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”—in these, and similar results for good, we see cause for regarding the recent efforts for the religious improvement of the working classes, with unfeigned thankfulness.

Still more satisfactory, because, as far as we have heard, with resulting benefit altogether unmingled, have been the special services on the week-day,—continued, for limited periods, at some of our larger parish churches. At these, for the most part, no doubt could exist that the persons induced to attend were the *right* persons. The uncouth vestments, the begrimed countenance, the almost superstitious dread of sitting down in a cushioned pew, all bore testimony to the fact, that, in respect of the persons drawn together, “the fishers of men” had cast their net on “the *right*

side of the ship." Nor was the deportment of these motley assemblages less striking. At St. Giles's, at Deptford, at Whitechapel, men were observed to stand up, with their eyes fixed on those of the preacher, with a rivetted and almost wild intentness. And, on the morrow, during their brief intervals of rest, in the factory or the dockyard, they were heard discussing, in groups, the subject of the last night's sermon. Whilst, best result of all, not a few were led, by this newly-awakened interest, to commence a stated attendance at the ordinary service of the Church.

Doubtless, the great problem to be worked out, in regard to these services, is how to eliminate from them the *spasmodic* element,—how to nurse up, and cherish an interest in ordinances, which is in great degree, the offspring of mere novelty and excitement, until it shall settle down into a calm love of worship for its own sake. We cannot expect the tender sapling to develope into a tree, all at once. The stimulant of the posting-bill, and the strange preacher, and the limited course, will have to be kept up for some time. But, by degrees, these may be used more sparingly. And, for the irregular and arbitrarily determined course, may be substituted one, coincident with our leading Church seasons; and, for the attraction of a preacher, come from far, the ministrations of the local clergy; and, for announced sermons on some awakening topic, a continuous course of expositions upon a subject, chosen

with especial reference to its capability of lively and graphic illustration. Week-day lectures, at the school room, also, with illustrative diagrams—such as those published by the Working Men's Educational Union,—may be found very helpful, to the end in view : and may be managed without any compromise of the office of the religious teacher.

The evening services at our great metropolitan cathedrals, we suppose, can never be made to develope into anything of a normal or settled form. Gathered from all parts, made up of all classes, drawn together by all varieties of influencing considerations, the congregations there, it may be believed, will always look for some exciting element. Whether any improvement could be made in the nature of the attracting influence, is a point which, we are sure, the wise and earnest-minded dignitaries, who originated this effort, will use all means in their power to determine. One engrafted element upon the present plan, there is, which, it has always appeared to us, would be worth a trial. We mean the taking up of the portion of the year, devoted to these services, with a well-considered and consecutive scheme of didactic teaching ;—beginning with the fundamental evidences of our religion, and proceeding to “set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us.” Avowed attacks on existing forms of error, there need be none ; but only a care to see that the people “be

established in this present truth." The great work of Bishop Pearson, on the Creed, as we know, was, originally, prepared for a series of this kind. And, in an age, when a sceptical philosophy is doing its work in the most plausible and subtle forms ;—when it is poisoning the springs of our literature ; when it claims, as its ally, each fresh discovery in science ; when it is trying to degrade to the rank of a peradventure the dear truth of ages, in order that it may smile upon the doubter with a tolerant and philosophic charity ;—in a day, when the young in their debates, and the poor at their clubs, and the rich in their drawing-rooms, will fling broadcast the seeds of unbelieving thought, 'no man forbidding them,'—we cannot but think that the function would be a glorious one, for our great metropolitan sanctuaries to aspire to, that, in the way we have recommended, they should be made bulwarks of the faith of the nation ; pillars of the Church of God ; great centres of light and learning, whose brightness should be seen from far, and whose warmth should be felt to the uttermost parts of the earth. "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob : and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths : for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Isai. ii. 3.



## CONCLUSION.

MANY other topics are there, in relation to this great subject, which we might have been glad to have considered ; even as, to many of those we have professed to consider, we could have wished, sometimes, to have given a fuller and more extended discussion. But we have been carried far beyond our prescribed limits, and feel compelled to bring these THOUGHTS ON PREACHING to a close.

For one class of remarks only, can we make further room. We began by referring to complaints of the inefficiency of the modern pulpit. We have said nothing to refute these complaints ; but much, every way, to show their force and reasonableness. Our subject ought not, therefore, to be shut up, without touching,—very slightly, but in no presumptuous

spirit, upon the question, WHAT CAN BE DONE TO MAKE THINGS BETTER,—AND BY WHOM ?

First, what can be done towards keeping out from the ministry *unsuitable or inefficient men* ?

Here it is not unusual to speak as if the whole responsibility rested with the ordaining Bishop. But this is hardly a fair, certainly not a full view of the case. To say nothing of the considerations which must always make a bishop slow to reject a duly presented candidate for orders,—the humiliation to the man, the pecuniary loss to his family, the inconvenience to the nominating incumbent, and the loss of several months of pastoral service to the parish in which the candidate was about to serve,—considerations, we grant, that ought to be thrown to the wind, in some cases,—yet, practically, a bishop can do little more than fix his minimum standard of intellectual attainment; and, it is manifest, that to this standard many would come up, who would afterwards turn out very inefficient preachers. Hence, it will have been observed, that in one or two recent Charges, the *onus* of introducing unsuitable men into the ministry, is thrown, by our Chief Pastors, upon the presenting incumbent. They say to us, and they say truly, ‘ We can ordain only such men as you send to us. We may refuse ordination, in cases of glaring incompetency. But still we must admit to orders, under broad condi-

tions ; so that if you are content to have as your fellow worker, a man of feeble powers, shallow mind, meagre scholarship, with no more of head or heart for the work of the ministry, than is necessary for the lowest limit of episcopal requirement,—short as the candidate may fall of the standard of *our wishes*,—it is not apparent on what grounds we could reject him. And, therefore, at your door, at least quite *as much* as at ours, should lie the reproach, of a lowered standard of ministerial qualification.’<sup>15</sup>

We confess that, to us, there seems some shew of reason in this. And we trust that, upon some of us, the lesson will not be lost of how great damage we may be doing to the Church, when, driven perhaps by stress of necessity to get some one to do our ‘routine work’

<sup>15</sup> See this line taken by the Bishop of Winchester, in his Charge for 1858, p. 19. The Bishop of London also, in his primary Charge, says, “The bishop will not long be able to maintain a higher standard than you think necessary. If, therefore, you form a low estimate of what is required in a curate ; if you are content with a young man who can read audibly (though I am free to confess there are many who can scarcely do this) ; and if you do not care whether his preaching be heart-stirring and real, and are not anxious as to whether or no he has a true sympathy with the poor, and understanding of their wants ; or if you treat learning as a thing not necessary, provided the young man be willing to go through a certain amount of routine work, you will do even more than a bishop, careless in his examinations, could do, to lower the standard of ministerial qualification.” Charge 1858, p. 25.

we, hurriedly, and with little inquiry, press upon the bishop, for ordination, an unproved or ill-furnished man. At all events, the blame of having our pulpits inefficiently served, ought not to rest with our rulers only. We believe the bishops have done, and are doing very much to promote *good preaching*;—shewing sympathy with it; giving encouragement to it; bestowing rewards upon it,—but for any effectual check upon the introduction of *bad preaching* into the Church, we cannot help thinking that the presbytery must mainly look to themselves.

But, secondly, what can be done in the way of providing *better training* for those, who, in regard of their personal qualities and endowments, ARE *suitable men*?

This opens a much wider field of inquiry. At the outset, we have the question presenting itself, whether the Universities should undertake the entire theological training of the future pastor, or whether they should leave their work to be supplemented by a Theological College,—such college being either connected with particular dioceses, or, as some think would be better, intended for the whole Church at large. We do not enter upon this question, however, because, so long as the *necessary* divinity certificates can be obtained, during the period of undergraduateship, very few students will be willing, even if they should be able,

to bear the charges of a second academical course. Hence, for the benefit of those, who will have no after-training, the Universities are bound to make their machinery as perfect as they can. No indisposition to modify and improve their system, has been manifested by the authorities, in late years, the question may well be asked, can they do anything more?

Now, first, let it be observed, that, at both our older Universities, the array of agencies, for equipping the future clergyman for his work, is, at first sight, most imposing. At Oxford, in addition to the ancient foundations of the Lady Margaret, and the Regius Professorships of Divinity and Hebrew, there have recently been added, as if with a special view to the better training of the theological student, several most important professorships,—such as a chair for Pastoral Theology, another for Ecclesiastical History, and a third for the Exegetical study of Holy Scripture. And a like onward movement has taken place at Cambridge. As a pendant to her more ancient foundations, which nearly resemble those at Oxford, she has, of late years, instituted her Theological Examination, scarcely to be called ‘the Voluntary’ now, and in which the students have recently been classed according to merit. To this have been added some new prizes, for the encouragement of theological learning, a Moral Science Tripos, and, within the last year, an additional Divinity Professorship.

All this looks hopeful. But the result has confessedly not been at all commensurate. And we naturally ask why? And the first answer to be given, we think, is, that while we have opened these fountains of wisdom for the theological student, we have done nothing to *make* him drink from them, and very little to *induce* him to drink. Nothing to make him drink,—because, on very few of the opportunities here specified, is attendance compulsory, as a pre-requisite to ordination. Nothing to induce him to drink, because, if he were to avail himself of them all,—were to attend the lectures, to read up for them, to profit by them to the utmost of his power, the result would not help him, in any material degree, to attain either to that high standing in the class-lists of the University, or to those posts of preferment in his own particular college,—one or both of which every man of intellect and spirit makes it an object of his University career to secure. The remedy for this, perhaps, is not easy. Whether it would not be possible to widen the basis of examinations for honours sufficiently, to take in the higher departments of theological learning,—so that a student could feel he was laying up stores for the work of the ministry, without prejudice to his final position in the University Calendar;—or whether, again, it might not conduce to a more diligent cultivation of theological studies, if, in the examination for some of the fellowships, at all events, a special prominence were given to theological



proficiency,—all these are questions, which, perhaps, those only who are in residence are fully competent to discuss. We merely give the impression of hundreds in our own time at college, and we believe of many, since, that the reason why men do not avail themselves of the theological advantages of the University, is, that for all the practical purposes of academical advancement, the pursuit of such studies would be, not an unremunerative employment only, but a positive hindrance in the way of their success. At all events, the complaint is heard, at both Universities, that the professors' lectures, as a rule, are very inadequately attended. And the question surely is one well worth the attention of the authorities, whether, without derogation from a high standard of classical and mathematical requirement, they might not attract divinity students to the lectures, by letting them see that, in the way of academical distinction, they should rather gain than lose by their attendance.

In relation to preaching, however, there is one other point deserving of notice, at least, if the Universities are to charge themselves with the entire training of the future candidate for the ministry. With all their array of educational appliances, no one will say that sufficient attention is given to a systematic exposition of the art and principles of preaching;—to direct practical instruction in the mode of preparing and delivering a sermon. The matter, we presume, has its place,

among a variety of other subjects, in the lectures on Pastoral Theology, at Oxford. And most valuable is the chapter on the 'composition of sermons,' in the recently published volume of Professor Blunt, at Cambridge. But surely preaching is much too important an element, in the Christian ministry, to be merely edged in as a subsidiary or collateral topic. Why should it not have a chair to itself? This would not interfere with any of the existing professorships. It would only supplement their work. *Their* design is to see whether, in the great subjects of history, evidence, criticism, doctrine, the future minister is *[apt to learn]*. Is the work of a 'professor of homiletics' less important to see that he is *apt to teach*?

Among remedial means, however, for raising the tone of preaching, in our Church, we must glance at one other point ; namely, the desirableness, if possible, of a better distribution of such preaching power as we possess ; so that the most efficient men should be sent to the places where they are most required. It is the barest justice to our Church to say that she does *not make the most of her own*. The system of administering preferment, whatever its other advantages, must be admitted to come behind in this respect,—in power of adaptation ; in care to ascertain the suitableness of the man for the sphere in which he is to be employed. The Wesleyans, it is known, are very particular about

this ; and so are other communions. Among dissenters of any class, no man like Robert Hall would be left, at least, for want of opportunity, to spend all his days in a country village ; neither would it be permitted, that churches, situated in the great centres of intelligence and wealth, should be served by their feeblest and most incompetent men. Under our system, anomalies, approximating to these, do take place constantly. Few of us, reverting to our college days, can fail to think of some marked man of our acquaintance, of whom the highest expectations of ministerial usefulness were entertained, and in whom, if the opportunity had been afforded, these expectations would have been realised. But the accidents of our ecclesiastical system cast his lot in one of the smallest and most sequestered nooks of the country ; and, as none seek him out, after a time he grows to the soil.

“ Remote from towns, he runs his godly race,  
Nor e'er has changed, nor wished to change his place.”

It were well if some sad instances in the opposite direction were not to be found, even among those who occupy posts of importance in our great cities. But we forbear.

The point for remark is, that there does not seem to be any help for this state of things, unless the patrons of Church benefices will rise to a more adequate sense of their solemn responsibilities. For, to say nothing

of those patrons of livings, whose moral perceptions seem utterly blind to the distinction between a *trust* and a *property*,—between *duties* sacredly confided to them for the benefit of the Church, and natural *rights*, which they may exercise as shall best please themselves,—it is to be feared, that, even with many of the conscientious among them, there is very little thought of *adaptation* in their appointments. The man is not unworthy of preferment in himself, but the inquiry is too rarely pursued further, is he exactly fitted for the place, or the place for him? Surely these things ought not so to be. Dispensers of Church preferment, even in a more solemn sense than those who are directly “put in trust with the Gospel,” may be said to be “stewards of the mysteries of God.” How should they not stand in awe of that Scripture, “Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.”<sup>16</sup>

Lastly, among remedial means we notice the importance of increased attention to a duty, common to all in its obligations, common to most of us, it is to be feared, in its frequent and sad neglect. We allude to the duty, binding upon all estates of men, to give to the subject of a “supply of fit persons to serve in the sacred ministry of Christ’s Church,” a special and permanent place in their *private prayers*. In relation to the private life of our Divine Lord, nothing strikes us more than the fact that He,—sinless, perfect, and having need of

<sup>16</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 2.

nothing,—should have dedicated such large portions of His time to secret devotion. Let us remember that the occasion of one of the longest of these mysterious exercises was just before designating the twelve to the work of the ministry. “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve whom also He named apostles.”<sup>17</sup> Of our public duty, in this matter, we are reminded periodically in the Ember-weeks. But both the example and the precept of our Lord would point to something more special, and retired, and private:—to the duty of each one of us, both to pray unto the Lord for more labourers, and also to pray that they may be men of His sending:—“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers unto His harvest.”<sup>18</sup> The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.”<sup>19</sup>

We trust that, in nothing advanced either in this chapter, or elsewhere, we shall appear to have spoken in any desponding spirit. On the contrary, if there be one sentiment more than another, with which we would have a reader rise from the perusal of these pages, it is that of a lively and grateful hope, in relation to the present condition and prospects of our Church. At no

<sup>17</sup> Luke vi. 12, 13.<sup>18</sup> Matt. ix. 37.<sup>19</sup> Ps. lxxviii. 11.

former period of her history, could she boast of rulers more diligent, or pastors more faithful, or professors of theology more learned, of a literature more fruitful in products of noble thought, or of mechanical appliances more varied, organized, and effective, for the fulfilment of her mission work in the world. It is because she exhibits everywhere such marks of vitality and strength, that, in view of any partial failures or deficiencies, she can bear a good deal of plain speaking. She is doing so well, that friends are naturally stimulated to inquire in which of her departments she may do better.

And if, in the department of her work, chosen as the subject of this book, her ministers had been chargeable even with fewer faults than they are, could it ever have been ill-timed for us to take counsel with each other, and with the age, how we might most effectually magnify our office, and, as ordained ambassadors for the truth of God, best make our mission prosper? Very difficult may it be, in doing this, to escape the charge of exalting the preacher's office unduly; of giving it a prominence, which seems to cast the other parts of our work into the shade; of causing the time, rightly due to the teaching of the young, and the consoling of the sick, and the searching out of the outcast, and all those ministries of love and tenderness which find their centre in the poor man's home,—



to be abstracted from our cures,—leaving the pulpit and the study between them to appropriate and divide the spoil. And only to the one *murus aheneus* can we look, as a covert from such charges, if they should be made. The fact will remain the same, that, as far as relates to the progress of a Christian civilization, there is work to be done by preaching, which can be done in no other way. Nothing can displace it; nothing can equal it; nothing can supersede its necessity. Its perpetuity rests, not more on its prescriptive claims, as an ordinance of Divine appointment, than upon its congruity with the great aptitudes of human nature, and with the ever shifting conditions of social life. If anything, in the history of modern society, could have led to a diminished dependence upon oral teaching, we should have said it would have been the augmented influence of the press,—penetrating by its multitudinous products into every cottage in the land; and seeming not to leave an inch of soil unbroken, in the whole territory of human thought. But, in every department of inquiry, the effect has been just the opposite. In art, in science, in literature, in philosophy, the printed book has only stimulated a desire for the fuller and more familiar expositions of the living voice,—the result being, not that the lecture supersedes the book, but that the book and the lecture go on together; each acting upon the other, and each making it neces-

sary for the other to start from a more advanced point of knowledge, and to aim constantly at a higher mark.

It is the same, or nearly so, in matters of religion. People are as eager after oral teaching now, as they were in the days when, for their written knowledge, they were obliged to be indebted to the embellished missal in the hands of the learned, or the costly vellum on the tables of the great. True, the eagerness does not proceed from the same cause, in the two cases. They were desirous of oral instruction *then*, because books *were scarce*, and "the lips of the priest" kept almost all the knowledge they could get. They are desirous of it *now*, because books are *plentiful*, and knowledge is increased, and so many are running to and fro, that each one looks up to his religious teacher, to keep him abreast with the men of his time. Hence, the kind of teaching required, must be teaching, not for an age of manuscripts, but for an age of books; not for an age in which the first rudiments of sacred science have to be taught by little and little, but for an age of large reading, and widely-diffused popular intelligence, when even the poorest will be comparing the statements he hears in the pulpit, with the books which he can read at home.

And this kind of teaching we must supply; or, if we do not, others will. If, in supplying it, or if, on the plea of better supplying it, we be found wanting in the

higher qualities of ambassadors for Christ; if there should be nothing in our message, either to build up the believer on his faith, or to cast down the formalist from his false hope; if there be no pungency in our appeals to the conscience, nothing heart-stirring in our word of exhortation; no fitness in our exhibitions of the great mystery of godliness, to draw all men to Christ,—to His footstool, to His cross, to His heart, to His throne;—in a word, if our whole preaching be permitted to degenerate into a hard, soulless, dialectic exercise,—of body without spirit, of intellect without heart, of Christianity without Christ,—then, may we be well assured that God will reckon with us for this also. He has told us we are to covet earnestly the best gifts, and intellect is one of the best. But the limits of its employment, in the pulpit, are defined plainly. It is to clothe truth with power. It is to adorn holiness with beauty. It is to help to seat conscience on its throne. It is to wait humbly on the teaching of the Eternal Spirit, that it may speak for God: and it is to concur with that Spirit, in witnessing for a slighted Saviour, in the hearts of men. It is well used of the Christian minister to reclaim the erring, to instruct the ignorant, to convince the gainsayer, to establish the wavering and the weak. The rest is vanity. The rest is presumption. The rest is sin.



## APPENDIX.

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A—Page 1.

### COMPLAINTS OF THE MODERN PULPIT.

As far as relates to the older reviews these complaints have been reiterated for upwards of twenty years ; and from the pen of Mr. Rogers in the *Edinburgh Review*, as well as from those of Lord Brougham and Sydney Smith, we have had the most unsparing strictures both upon our pulpit deficiencies, and upon the excuses commonly made for them. See article on *Robert Hall's Modern Infidelity* ; and the article in the number for *October*, 1840, by Mr. Rogers. The latter touches admirably on the plea of "much occupation" as the hindrance to better preparation ; whilst Sydney Smith deals in his own peculiar way, with some other answers. He says, "It is commonly answered that a clergyman is to recommend himself, not by his eloquence, but by the purity of his life and the soundness of his doctrine ; an objection good enough if any connection could be pointed out between eloquence, heresy, and dissipation ; but if it is possible for a man to live well, preach well, and teach well, at the same time, such objections, resting upon a supposed incompatibility of these good qualities are duller than the dullness they defend." For complaints among literary reviewers, of more recent date, it may be sufficient to refer to the *North British Review*, for February, 1856 ; the *Athenæum*, for November, 1859 ; and to an article in the *Saturday Review*, a few months ago, with the astounding title of "*Fools!*"

Complaints also have come very thickly upon us from our

ecclesiastical superiors. Archdeacon Sinclair, as is well known, devoted almost an entire *Charge* to the subject in 1855. The Archdeacon of Winchester did the same in the last charge he delivered before his promotion to the see of Rochester. But the words likely to weigh most, considering the eminent qualifications of the writer to speak upon such a subject, are those of the present Bishop of Oxford. And his language is outspoken indeed. In his recent charge we find him speaking in the following words: "One dark spot there is, amid much that is bright, in regard to this subject. The number of men endowed with the highest gifts of intellect who give themselves to the Christian ministry appears to me to be smaller than it was fifteen years ago." And in another part he complains that men are found "entering the pulpit with little preparation, and uttering from it, with a perilous facility of language, empty, vapid, and pointless generalities." Whilst in a recent volume of addresses to his candidates for orders, we have the following remarks;—"I press this the more because no one can listen carefully to the majority of sermons preached in our churches; few, alas, can closely scrutinize their own, without deep sorrow, shame, and dejection of heart. . . . How many sermons seem to be composed with no better idea than that they must occupy a certain time prescribed by custom, and that they must be filled with the religious phrases current in this or that school of theological opinion. Hence we find in them prefaces of inordinate length, porches larger than the buildings to which they lead; truisms repeated with a calm perseverance of dull repetition which is almost marvellous; vague generalities about the fall and about redemption, as if these awful mysteries were empty words, and not living burning verities. We hear, perhaps, one sermon wandering languidly over the whole scheme of theology, containing in itself a prophecy of its perpetual repetition, with an altered text, and sentences interchanged in collocation through all succeeding Sundays. . . . And, my brethren, can we wonder if, under such preaching, men slumber on unawakened; if conversions are few, if edification is scanty, if sinners abound, if saints are rare, if, though the prophet prophecy, all be still as it was of old; if there be no noise nor shaking, no coming together of the bones, bone to his



bone? To such a dead condemning ministry I earnestly pray God, even our Father, for His dear Son's sake, that none of you may at this time be sent forth. May He open your mouths, may He give you utterance, may He make you to 'speak boldly as ye ought to speak,' the mysteries of Christ's eternal Gospel."—*Addresses to Candidates for Ordination*, p. 53.

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B—Page 46.

ON SOME OF THE MORE DANGEROUS PHASES OF MODERN  
RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

To a subject of this kind it would be obviously impossible to do anything like justice in a note. We can only indicate tendencies. Our dangers are from two sides—the doing *too little* honour to human reason, and the doing *too much*. Small by comparison, it may be, with the opposite error, we yet cannot but see a danger in underrating the powers of the human intelligence. We would do all honour to the vigorous and unanswerable eloquence, with which a recent Bampton Lecturer has mapped out for the rationalist his proper and legitimate domain; and shewn the hopeless obscurity which awaits him, if he presume to cross its borderline. But we must be very careful lest the sword which we use to drive an inquirer back from forbidden ground, do not equally deter him from standing, with any confidence, on ground that is lawful and true; in other words, lest that "speculative knowledge" of God which we affirm to be impossible to him by the use of his unassisted faculties, be not, on these assumed conditions of human thought, impossible to him under a revealed system also. Without pretending, or even presuming to discuss the large questions opened by the author of "The Limits of Religious Thought," we cannot, especially in view of the use which may be made of the admissions by the philosophical infidel, withhold the expression of our belief, that the theory contained in that work, very much overstates the extent of our ignorance of the Divine Being; that it tends to reduce to an abject and impossible submission, the most important functions of the

rational nature; that it virtually ignores the possibility of any true science of dogmatic theology; that it makes the necessarily inadequate conceptions which the finite mind forms of Godhead, all one with blank and blind uncertainty; and that, with regard to the little which, even from Revelation, we can know about God, it must, on this shewing, be doubtful whether that little be positively true—or true in any sense, indeed, other than that it would be for our good *to believe* it true. “All that Revelation does give or can give ‘upon this theory’ are those *regulative ideas* of the Deity which are sufficient to guide our practice but not to satisfy our intellect; which tell us not what God *is in Himself*, but how He wills that we should *think of Him*.”

Far greater, however, are the dangers which we apprehend from the side of an undue exaltation of human reason; from the impatience manifested by a modern school to be set free of all dogmatic restraint; and to be allowed to minister in our Church, while of creeds, or articles, they should believe as little or as much as they please. We are the more distrustful of this movement, from observing by whom some of the authors of the work entitled “Essays and Reviews” are being claimed as allies and friends—such as the leaders of the Unitarian theology in America, and some writers of the same school in our own country. These men, together with a writer in *Fraser’s Magazine* (a periodical from which we should have expected better things) being bent on setting up an antagonism between that section of the Church which holds fast by its established verities and the great body of the more highly educated laity,—are but too glad to hail the writers of these “Essays” as the chosen apostles of their school. It is very significant that the *Westminster Review* seems to repudiate the authors of this Neo-Christianity as going too far! The “Essays” are ‘able’ but ‘suicidal.’

On the extravagancies of this modern teaching, however, we are relieved from saying anything further, by being able to quote the following admirable protest in the recent Charge of the Lord Bishop of Oxford:—

“Are there not, my reverend brethren, signs enough abroad now of special danger to make us drop our lesser differences, and combine together as one man, striving earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints? When

from within our own encampment we hear voices declaring that our whole belief in the Atonement wrought out for us by the Sacrifice on the Cross is an ignorant misconception—that the miracles and the prophecies of Scripture are part of an irrational supernaturalism which it is the duty of a remorseless criticism to expose and to account for, by such discoveries as that the imagination has allied itself with the affections to produce them, and that they may safely be brought down to a natural rationalism ;—by such suggestions as that the description of the passage of the Red Sea is the latitude of poetry—that the avenger, who slew the firstborn, is the Bedouin host, akin nearly to Jethro, and more remotely to Israel ;—when the history of the Bible is explained away, by being treated as a legend, and its prophecy deprived of all supernatural character by being turned into a history of past or present events—when we are told that, had our Lord come to us now, instead of in the youth of the world, the truth of His Divine nature would not have been recognised ; that is to say, that it was the peculiar stage in which flesh and blood then were, and not the revelation of His Father who was in heaven which enabled the Apostles to believe in Him—when in words, as far as opinion is privately entertained is concerned, the liberty of the English clergyman appears to be complete—when we are told that men may sign any Article of the National Church, if it is only their own opinions which are at variance with them—when we are told that they may sign, solemnly before God, that they allow certain articles of belief, meaning thereby only that they allow their existence as the lesser of two great evils, and that, under the Sixth Article, one may literally or allegorically, or as a parable, or as poetry or a legend, receive the story of the serpent tempting Eve and speaking in a man's voice ; and, in like manner, the arresting of the earth's motion, the water standing still, the universality of the Deluge, the confusion of tongues, the taking up of Elijah corporeally into heaven, the nature of angels, and the miraculous particulars of many other events ;—when Abraham's great act of obedient faith in not withholding his son, even his only son, but offering him up at the express command of God, is commuted by the gross ritual of Syrian notes into a traditional revelation, while the awe of the Divine voice bid-

ding him slay his son, and his being stayed by the angel from doing so, is watered down into an allegory meaning that the Father in whom he trusted was better pleased with mercy than with sacrifice ;—when it is maintained that St. Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, in the utterances of his martyrdom, and St. Paul proving from the history of his people that Jesus was the Christ, would naturally speak not only words of truth, but after the received accounts—when, I say, such words as these are deliberately uttered by our ordained clergy, while the slowness even of English theologians to accept such a treatment of God's revelation, is scoffed at in such words as the following, even by those in our Universities who no longer repeat fully the Shibboleth of the Reformers, the explicitness of truth and error—‘ He who assents most, committing himself least to baseness, being reckoned the wisest ;’ whilst those who maintain the old truth, I trust with most of us, my brethren, are branded as Baal's prophets, and the four hundred prophets of the grove, who cry out for falsehood—whilst, I say, such words as these are heard from ordained men amongst us, and who still keep their places in the National Church, is it not a time for us, if we do hold openly by the Holy Scriptures, as the one inspired voice of God's written revelation—if we do hold to the ancient creeds as the summary of the good deposit—if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as very God and very man—if we believe in His offering Himself on the cross as the one only true and sufficient sacrifice, satisfaction, and atonement for the sins of the whole world,—is it not time for us, laying aside our suspicions and our divisions about small matters, to combine together in prayer, and trust, and labour, and love, and watching, lest, whilst we dispute needlessly about the lesser matters of the law, we be robbed unawares of the very foundations of the faith.”—*Charge*, 1860.

## C—Page 100.

## ON MISTAKES IN THE SELECTION OF TEXTS FOR SERMONS.

A temptation to hang a sermon upon an inapposite text, sometimes arises from the pithy and sententious form of the English rendering, causing particular passages to pass into the current coinage of our more popular quotations. Of this kind is the temptation to take, for a sermon on 'the reality of the Christian's inner life,' the text, *The kingdom of God is within you* (Luke xvii. 21). Or to select, as the basis of a discourse on 'the danger of trifling with sin,'—imitating it, jesting about it, going too near to it,—those words of our version, *Abstain from all appearance of evil* (1 Thess. v. 23).<sup>1</sup> See some valuable remarks on both these passages, in Dean Trench's work, *On the Authorized Version of the New Testament*, pp. 117 and 127, 2nd Edition. In regard to the text in Luke, as the Dean intimates, if the higher or spiritual sense had been intended, the Pharisees were not the persons to whom such words would have been addressed. Whilst, as to the text from Thessalonians, it is well argued, that the injunction, as it stands in our authorized version, announces a principle of doubtful ethics;—many things being necessary to be done, which, to those who do not understand, or do not sympathise with the motives of the agent, must have *the appearance of evil*.

Our younger brethren will not suppose, from the remarks made upon this subject, either that we desire to generate in them a distrust of our English version, or that we expect to find, in them, such a precision of philological knowledge, as shall enable them, on their own judgment, to pronounce where that version is at fault. On the first point, the general and even wonderful accuracy of our translation, there is happily, among scholars of any repute, not the slightest disagreement. Some, even of its commonly quoted faults, are shewn by Dean Trench to be no faults of the translators at all,—who gave the true sense of

<sup>1</sup> In reference to the remark in the text on 2 Pet. iii. 16 (see page 100), we ought to have observed, from Hammond, that the King's MS. *does* read, *ἐν αἰς*, making the reference to be to the *Epistles*.



the original in the English of *their* time, however much the meaning of particular words may have changed since. See his remarks on *Take no thought* (Matt. vi. 25), and *Why cumbereth it the ground?* (Luke xiii. 7,) pp. 39, 40. On the other point,—the scholarship necessary to sit in judgment upon the renderings of our English version,—it is to be observed, that, so far as relates to guarding against positively unsuitable texts, nothing more seems to be required of the young preacher, than the tabulating, or registering, in his interleaved Greek Testament, of such renderings as most scholars, of any mark, have concurred in pronouncing to be either misleading or defective. How few these inaccuracies are, and how relatively unimportant, may be inferred from the specimens presented to us in such works as *Professor Scholefield's Hints for an Improved Translation*; or *Bishop Middleton's Doctrine of the Greek Article*; or the admirable work of Dean Trench referred to in this note. In a recent commentary on the minor prophets, the English reader of the Old Testament could not but have been gratified by the testimony to the extreme accuracy of our version, borne by a man of such profound scholarship as Dr. Pusey. The words of another scholar, on our New Testament version, are equally assuring. "The flaws pointed out are frequently so small and so slight, that it might almost seem as if the objector had armed his eye with a microscope for the purpose of detecting that which otherwise would have escaped notice, and which, even if it were faulty, might well have been suffered to pass by, unchallenged and lost sight of, in the general beauty of the whole."—*Dean Trench's Introd. Remarks*, p. 7.

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D—Page 128.

SOUTH ON THE SERMONS OF THE PURITANS.

The following is a description, by South, of one of these *many-headed* sermons, which, as being itself given in a sermon,



may serve as a specimen of the pulpit license of that age. The sermon was preached before the University :—

“I hope it will not prove offensive to the auditory, if, to release it (could I be so happy) from suffering by such stuff for the future, I venture upon some short description of it; and it is briefly thus,—First of all, they seize upon some text, from whence they draw something, which they call a doctrine, and well may it be said to be *drawn* from the words, forasmuch as it seldom naturally flows or results from them. In the next place, being thus provided, they branch it into several heads, perhaps twenty or thirty, or upwards. Whereupon, for the prosecution of these, they repair to some trusty concordance, which never fails them; and, by the help of that, they range six or seven Scriptures under each head; which Scriptures they prosecute one by one, first amplifying and enlarging upon one, for some considerable time, till they have spoiled it; and then, that being done, they pass to another, which, in its turn, suffers accordingly. And these impertinent and unpremeditated enlargements, they look upon as the motions and breathings of the Spirit, and, therefore, much beyond those carnal ordinances of sense and reason, supported by industry and study; and this they call a saving way of preaching; as it must be confessed to be a way to save much labour, and nothing else that I know of.”—*Sermons*, vol. i., p. 318.

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E—Page 153.

#### USE OF WORDS OF SAXON ROOT.

A curious attempt to introduce a translation of the New Testament, which should be composed, as far as possible, of Saxon words, was made by Sir John Cheke, Regius Pro-

fessor of Greek, in the University of Cambridge, and afterwards secretary of state to King Edward the Sixth. It was that Cheke of whom Milton speaks in his sonnets,

“Thy age, like ours, O soul of Sir John Cheek !  
Hated not learning worse than toad or asp,  
When thou taught'st Cambridge, and King Edward Greek.”

His specimens of a translation upon this principle, including the Gospel of St. Matthew, and a part of the Gospel of St. Mark, have been edited by Mr. Goodwin,<sup>2</sup> who has given an interesting introduction, setting forth the circumstances under which Sir John Cheke was induced to make the attempt. After alluding to the many words, from foreign sources, which, by long settlement and usage, have become naturalized among us, Mr. Goodwin observes:—“But Cheke considered the English language to be sufficiently copious without these words. In fact, he thought them intruders, and that the English language was degraded by being mixed up with other words, and phrases, for which we were indebted to other countries. He consequently disliked the English translations of the Bible, which had at that time been made, and were in common use, as being, in some degree, open to the charge of containing many words of foreign root ; and thus speaking a language but partially understood by the lower orders of the people.”<sup>3</sup> And, therefore, to quote the learned professor's own language, he was desirous “to let in the light more fully upon the men of his own generation, by opening the window : to break the she'll, that they might eat the kernel : to put aside the curtain, that they might look into the holy place : to remove the cover of the well, that they might come by the water, even as Jacob rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well, by which means the flocks of Laban were watered.”<sup>4</sup>

Let us see *Quid dignum tanto feret?* We need not take whole passages, but may consider whether in that age or

<sup>2</sup> The Gospel according to St. Matthew, &c. Edited by James Goodwin, B.D. Pickering, 1843.

<sup>3</sup> Introd., p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Preface, p. 3.

this, the ends of intelligibility would have been answered by such substitutions as the following;—

Cheke.	Matt.	Authorised Version.
moond.	iv. 24.	lunatic.
tollers.	v. 46.	publicans.
aches.	viii. 15.	fever.
bywordes.	xiii. 3.	parables.
lernerd man.	xiii. 52.	scribe.
orders.	xv. 2.	traditions.
gainbirth.	xix. 28.	regeneration.
balie.	xx. 8.	steward.
on writing.	xxii. 20.	superscription.
uprising.	xxii. 23.	resurrection.
robri (robbery).	xxiii. 25.	extortion.
ground works.	xxv. 34.	foundation.
crossed.	xxvii. 22.	crucified.

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F—Page 289.

EXTEMPORANEOUS VOLUBILITY.

LORD BROUGHAM, who throughout his admirable essays on Athenian eloquence, insists so much upon the necessity of much labour and written preparation in order to effective oratory, observes, in relation to the voluble facilities of some speakers:—

“Among the sources of this corruption may clearly be distinguished, as the most fruitful, the habit of extempore speaking acquired rapidly by persons who frequent popular assemblies, and, beginning at the wrong end, attempt to speak before they have studied the art of oratory, or even duly stored their minds with the treasures of thought and of language, which can only be drawn from assiduous intercourse with the ancient and modern classics. The truth is, that a certain proficiency in public speaking may be attained, with nearly infallible certainty, by any person who

chooses to give himself the trouble of frequently trying it, and can harden himself against the pain of frequent failure. Complete self-possession and perfect fluency are thus acquired almost mechanically, and with no reference to the talents of him who becomes possessed of them. If he is a man of no capacity, his speeches will of course be very bad; but, though he be a man of genius, they will not be eloquent. A sensible remark, or a fine image, may frequently occur, but the loose, and slovenly, and poor diction, the want of art in combining and disposing his ideas, the inability to bring out many of his thoughts, and the utter incompetency to present any of them in the best and most efficient form, will deprive such a speaker of all claims to the character of an orator, and reduce him to the level of an ordinary talker. Perhaps the habit of speaking may have taught him something of arrangement, and a few of the simplest methods of producing an impression, but beyond these first steps he cannot possibly proceed by this empirical process, and his diction is sure to be much worse than if he had never made the attempt—clumsy, redundant, incorrect, unlimited in quantity, but of no value. Such a speaker is never in want of a word, and hardly ever has one that is worth having.

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G—*Page 289.*

LORD BROUGHAM'S LETTER TO THE FATHER OF MACAULAY.

As we have once or twice made reference to this letter, we here present, at length, the parts of it bearing upon our subject. The letter is addressed to *Zachary Macaulay, Esq.*; and is dated *Newcastle, March 10, 1823*. After some remarks upon the high promise exhibited by the future historian at Cambridge, and the necessity of cultivating general information for his particular profession of the law,

he comes to the following more specific directions for the cultivation of oratory:—

“1. The first point is this,—the beginning of the art is to acquire a habit of easy speaking; and, in whatever way this can be had (which individual inclination or accident will generally direct, and may safely be allowed to do so), it must be had. Now, I differ from all other doctors of rhetoric in this,—I say, let him first of all learn to speak easily and fluently, as well and as sensibly as he can, no doubt, but at any rate let him learn to speak. This is to eloquence, or good public speaking, what the being able to talk in a child is to correct grammatical speech. It is the requisite foundation, and on it you must build. Moreover, it can only be acquired young, therefore let it by all means, and at any sacrifice, be gotten hold of forthwith. But in acquiring it, every sort of slovenly error will also be acquired. It must be got by a habit of easy writing (which, as Wyndham said, proved hard reading); by a custom of talking much in company; by speaking in debating societies, with little attention to rule, and mere love of saying something at any rate, than of saying anything well. I can even suppose that more attention is paid to the matter in such discussions than in the manner of saying it; yet still to say it easily, *ad libitum*, to be able to say what you choose, and what you have to say,—this is the first requisite, to acquire which everything else must for the present be sacrificed.

“2. The next step is the grand one,—to convert this style of easy speaking into chaste eloquence. And here there is but one rule. I do earnestly entreat your son to set daily and nightly before him the Greek models. First of all he may look to the best modern speeches (as he probably has already); Burke’s best compositions, as the *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*; speech ‘On the American Conciliation,’ and ‘On the Nabob of Arcot’s Debt;’ Fox’s ‘Speech on the Westminster Scrutiny’ (the first part of which he should pore over till he has it by heart); ‘On the Russian Armament;’ and ‘On the War,’ 1803, with one or two of Wyndham’s best, and very few, or rather none, of Sheridan’s; but he must by no means

stop here. If he would be a great orator, he must go at once to the fountain head, and be familiar with every one of the great orations of Demosthenes. I take for granted that he knows those of Cicero by heart; they are very beautiful, but not very useful, except perhaps the *Milo, pro Ligario*, and one or two more; but the Greek must positively be the model; and merely reading it, as boys do, to know the language, won't do at all; he must enter into the spirit of each speech, thoroughly know the positions of the parties, follow each turn of the argument, and make the absolutely perfect and most chaste and severe composition familiar to his mind. His taste will improve every time he reads and repeats to himself (for he should have the fine passages by heart), and he will learn how much may be done by a skilful use of a few words and a rigorous rejection of all superfluities. In this view I hold a familiar knowledge of Dante to be next to Demosthenes. It is in vain to say that imitations of these models won't do for our times. First, I do not counsel any imitation, but only an imbibing of the same spirit. Secondly, I know from experience that nothing is half so successful in these times (bad though they be) as what has been formed on the Greek models. I use a very poor instance in giving my own experience, but I do assure you that both in courts of law and Parliament, and even to mobs, I have never made so much play (to use a very modern phrase) as when I was almost translating from the Greek. I composed the peroration of my speech for the Queen, in the Lords, after reading and repeating *Demosthenes* for three or four weeks, and I composed it twenty times over at least, and it certainly succeeded in a very extraordinary degree, and far above any merits of its own. This leads me to remark, that though speaking, with writing beforehand, is very well until the habit of easy speech is acquired, yet after that he can never write too much; this is quite clear. It is laborious, no doubt, and it is more difficult beyond comparison than speaking off-hand; but it is necessary to perfect oratory, and at any rate it is necessary to acquire the habit of correct diction. But I go further, and say, even to the end of a man's life he must prepare word for word most of his finer passages. Now, would he be a great orator or no? In



other words, would he have almost absolute power of doing good to mankind, in a free country, or no ? So he wills this, he must follow these rules.

“ Believe me truly yours,

“ H. BROUGHAM.”

Extracted from the *Times* newspaper.

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H—Page 290.

MR. PITT'S MODE OF ACQUIRING FACILITY OF EXPRESSION.

The following confirmation of the account given in the text, in reference to Pitt's method of acquiring a *copia verborum*, is furnished by Lord Stanhope :—

“ No man had that gift of using in public speaking the right word in the right place—no man carried that gift to a higher degree of perfection, as all parties have owned, than Mr. Pitt. Now, my father had the honour to be connected in relationship with that great man, and, as such he had the privilege of being in the house with him sometimes for many weeks together. Presuming on that familiar intercourse he told me he ventured on one occasion to ask Mr. Pitt by what means—by what course of study—he had acquired that admirable readiness of speech—that aptness of finding the right word. Mr. Pitt replied that whatever readiness he might be thought to possess in that respect, he believed he derived very much from a practice his father, the great Lord Chatham, had enjoined on him. Lord Chatham had bid him take up any book in some foreign language with which he was well acquainted—in Latin, Greek, or French, for example. Lord Chatham then enjoined him to read out of this work a passage in English, stopping, where he was not sure of the word, until the right one came, and then proceed. Mr. Pitt states that he had assiduously followed this practice. At first he had often to stop for a while before he could find the proper

word, but he found the difficulties gradually disappear, until what was a toil to him at first became at last an easy and familiar task.—*Address on Installation, as Lord Rector of Aberdeen.*”

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I—Page 293.

ROBERT HALL'S METHOD OF PREPARING HIS SERMONS.

The following is the account of the *usual course* of this eminent preacher, as distinguished from his method on preaching his sermon entitled “Reflections on War,” which he delivered *memoriter*, from a previously composed manuscript :—

“That course was, very briefly to sketch, commonly upon a sheet of letter paper, (in some cases rather more fully) the plan of the proposed discourse, marking the divisions, specifying a few texts, and sometimes writing the first sentence ; or, occasionally, a few other sentences, especially in those parts where an argument could not be adequately stated without great technical correctness of language. This he regarded as “digging a channel for his thoughts to flow in.” Then calling into exercise the power of abstraction, which he possessed in a degree I never saw equalled, he would, whether alone or not, pursue his trains of thought, retrace and extend them, until the whole were engraven on his mind ; and, when once so fixed in their entire connexion, they were never after obliterated. The result was on all occasions the same ; so that without recurring to the ordinary expedients, or loading his memory with words and phrases, he uniformly brought his mind, with an unburdened vigour and elasticity, to bear upon its immediate purpose, recalling his selected train of thought, and communicating it to others, in diction the most felicitous, appropriate, and impressive. This was uniformly the case with regard to the tenour and substance of his discourses ; but the most striking and impressive passages were often, strictly speaking, extemporaneous.”—*Note by Dr. Gregory, Works, Vol i. p. 9.*

On most occasions, however, Mr. Hall made use of his memory for the delivery of the finer parts of his sermon. The following is related by the Essayist "On his character as a preacher :"—

"Once, in a conversation with a few friends who had led him to talk of his preaching, and to answer, among other questions, one respecting this supposed and reported extemporaneous production of the most striking parts of his sermons, in the early period of his ministry, he surprised us by saying, that most of them, so far from being extemporaneous, had been so deliberately prepared that the words were selected, and the construction and order of the sentences adjusted."—*Foster's Essay, Hall's Works*, Vol vi. p. 156.

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### K—Page 311.

#### PUBLIC CATECHIZING IN THE CHURCH.

In giving directions to the "Country Parson" on this subject, *George Herbert* says :—

"The whole skill consists but in these three points; first, an aim and mark of the whole discourse whither to drive the answerer, which the questionist must have in his mind before any question be propounded, upon which and to which the questions are to be chained. Secondly, a most plain and easy framing of the question, even containing in virtue the answer also, especially to the more ignorant. Thirdly, when the answerer sticks, an illustrating of the thing by something else which he knows, making what he knows serve him in what he knows not."—Ch. xxi.

On the benefit to the adult members of the congregation *Archdeacon Bather* remarks :—

"By open catechizing in the church, very much may also be done for remedy of the difficulties which are continually besetting you, in consequence of the defective and perhaps utterly neglected education of the grown members of your

congregations. . . . You will have an opportunity you much want of instilling instruction, drop by drop into ignorant adults as well as into ignorant children; and you will be enabled, with almost equal ease and advantage to arrest and fix their attention. For next to being asked a question ourselves, nothing awakens and interests us more than hearing others questioned. There will be curiosity to catch the child's reply. A thought can scarcely fail to cross the listener how he should reply himself, or whether he could reply. Many are glad to get information without the risk of exposing present ignorance; and when the information is watched and waited for, it is retained. Most people take pleasure in contemplating the efforts of children; and here the auditory is composed of persons who regard the very children before them with a peculiar solicitude."—*Charge to the Archdeaconry of Salop*, 1835.

To the same excellent writer we are indebted for a small volume of practical directions upon this subject, which will be found very useful. It is a posthumous work, entitled *Hints on the Art of Catechising*; Rivingtons, 1852. Archdeacon Sinclair's *Questions on the Catechism*, it may be presumed, is in most schools. See also the section on this subject in Rev. E. Monro's *Parochial Work*, 2nd Edition, p. 148. Some of the *Author's* thoughts upon the subject are given in a little work, published by the Christian Knowledge Society, entitled 'Practical Hintson Sunday School Teaching.

# INDEX.

	PAGE
Action, use of in preaching . . .	246
Dr. Johnson's opinion of . . .	246
Whitefield's " . . .	248
Sidney Smith upon . . .	251
Addison, quoted . . .	295
Andrewes, Bishop, referred to . . .	129
Arnold, Dr. " . . .	104
Artisans, intelligence of . . .	38
Authority, speaking with . . .	33
Barrow, referred to . . .	110
Lautain, on extempore preaching . . .	238
Baxter, quoted, . . .	86, 285
Berkeley, Bishop, on elocution . . .	223
Bingham, on first Christian Preachers . . .	266
Bishops, rejection of candidates by . . .	336
Blair, referred to . . .	119
Blunt, Prof. quoted . . .	33, 48, 100
Bridge's Christian Ministry, quoted . . .	58, 190, 281
Brougham's Lord letter to Mr. Macaulay . . .	239
on volubility . . .	361
Burnet, Bishop, quoted 61, 99, 149, 227, 267 . . .	
Butler, Archer referred to . . .	131
Catechizing, public . . .	311
Chalmers, Dr. referred to . . .	131
his vehement oratory . . .	248
Charity sermons . . .	323
Charles the Second's proclamation to the University of Cambridge . . .	268
Cheke, Sir J. on Saxon Translations of New Testament . . .	359
Children, sermons to . . .	317
Christ preaching, what it is . . .	192
Claude, on composition of a sermon . . .	29
Commonwealth, the, preaching in the times of . . .	12
Complementary and correlative truths . . .	193
Conclusion, tediousness in . . .	138
Controversial topics, introduction . . .	81
Countenance in preaching . . .	252
Cowper referred to . . .	228
Delivery of a sermon . . .	225
natural, what . . .	235
Devoutness personal, necessity of . . .	89
De Quincy, referred to . . .	169, 144
Discussion of a sermon by illustration . . .	118
by observation . . .	119
by confirmation . . .	120
by investigation . . .	121
by continual application . . .	122
by antithesis . . .	123
Divisions of sermons . . .	126
Earnestness, necessity of . . .	255
Edinburgh Review referred to . . .	47

	PAGE
Elocution, Prof. Blunt on . . .	223
study of . . .	228
importance of among the ancients . . .	232
Essays and Reviews . . .	354
Ethics of the Old Testament . . .	180
Exordium of a sermon . . .	106
examples of . . .	108
Experimental preaching . . .	23
Expository preaching . . .	302
Expression facile, Lord Brougham on . . .	239
Pitt's plan for acquiring . . .	291
Extempore preaching in Scotch Church . . .	283
Failures in, of clever men . . .	278
Dean Swift on . . .	274
Practice of in other communions . . .	279
Memoriter method of . . .	280
Method of by short notes . . .	284
Self-reliant method . . .	286
writing necessary for, . . .	292, 296
deliberate utterance in . . .	293
compatible with careful style . . .	263
practice of early preachers . . .	265
practice of attainable . . .	273
Faith and works, relation of . . .	201
Fears of men to be appealed to . . .	71
Feelings appealed to in Scripture . . .	70
Fénélon, Abp., quoted, . . .	67
Fléchier referred to . . .	122
Foster's Essays . . .	152
Fox, C. J., anecdote of . . .	296
Franklin, Dr. referred to . . .	61
Goldsmith, referred to . . .	171
Gospel, the considered as a system . . .	30
in its relations to other truth . . .	31
not an eclectic system . . .	15
Gresley's Ecclesiastes Anglicanus, referred to, . . .	18, 104, 230, 285
Gurney, Rev. J. H., quoted . . .	212
Hall, Robert, referred to . . .	262
his mode of pulpit preparation . . .	262
Harmony in a discourse . . .	289
Hare, Mr., referred to . . .	157
Herbert George, quoted . . .	49, 5
Holy Scripture, figurative style of . . .	165
Horsley, referred to . . .	121, 135
Horne, Bishop, quoted . . .	111
Infidel tendencies of the age . . .	42
Instruction, a leading feature of preaching . . .	23
Intellectual demands of the age . . .	37
Irving, Edward, referred to . . .	209
Jay, Mr., referred to . . .	123
Jesting in the pulpit . . .	85

	PAGE		PAGE
Johnson, Dr. on gesture . . . . .	246	Sermons, definitions of . . . . .	93
Latimer, Bishop, quoted . . . . .	85	structure of . . . . .	92
Legal preaching . . . . .	203	disorderly . . . . .	116
Mr. Simeon, on . . . . .	204	subject of . . . . .	93
London, Bishop of, quoted . . . . .	337	courses of . . . . .	308
Luther, referred to . . . . .	203	subject-matter of . . . . .	175
Macintosh, Sir James, referred to . . . . .	148	Sheridan's early efforts in oratory . . . . .	278
Materials borrowed, use of . . . . .	60	Sherlock referred to . . . . .	119
Massillon, referred to . . . . .	282	Simeon on legal preaching . . . . .	204
Memory, use of, by Dr. Chalmers . . . . .	293	Sinclair, Archdeacon, quoted . . . . .	116, 190
by Lord Brougham . . . . .	293	Special services . . . . .	330
by Robert Hall . . . . .	39	Spiritual preaching . . . . .	216
Mercantile classes, intelligence of . . . . .	39	Spiritualizing of Scripture . . . . .	103
Moule's Christian Oratory quoted . . . . .	56 266	Sterne referred to . . . . .	112
Novelty, power of, in preaching . . . . .	25	Style, in relation to preaching . . . . .	143
Object of preaching, to persuade . . . . .	66	compression of . . . . .	162
Objective teaching . . . . .	214	elaboration in . . . . .	168
Occupations of Clergymen varied . . . . .	46	plainness of . . . . .	155
Ogden referred to . . . . .	111	simplicity of . . . . .	160
Open air preaching . . . . .	327	Tillotson's rule for . . . . .	155
Orator, ancient, education of . . . . .	252	Sydney Smith on energetic delivery . . . . .	251
Oxford, Bishop of, quoted . . . . .	352	Taylor, Jeremy referred to . . . . .	121
Paley on divisions . . . . .	136	Teaching, an essential part of preach- ing . . . . .	25
unity . . . . .	115	Texts, choice of . . . . .	95
Partial preaching . . . . .	118	to be fairly discussed . . . . .	97
Passions, appeals to in preaching . . . . .	63	inappropriate, choice of . . . . .	100
Peroration . . . . .	137	strange and startling . . . . .	103
Persuasion the object of preaching . . . . .	66	Throat, the clergyman's . . . . .	238
Phases of modern religious thought . . . . .	45	Topics of the day, preaching on . . . . .	209
Pitt, Mr., on Cecil's preaching . . . . .	219	Tracts for the times, referred to . . . . .	8
Political preaching . . . . .	210	Trench, Dean, referred to . . . . .	151
Poorer classes, condescending to . . . . .	175	on authorised version . . . . .	357
Preaching, history of, under Old Testament . . . . .	3	Truths, fundamental, precedence of . . . . .	186
under New Testament . . . . .	6	Uction in preaching . . . . .	87
universal adaptation of . . . . .	14	Unity in a discourse . . . . .	113
office of, to instruct . . . . .	18	Unity of revelation . . . . .	177
Plain preaching . . . . .	171	University preparation for preaching . . . . .	338
Predestination, doctrine of, referred to . . . . .	194	Voice, the importance of cultivating . . . . .	237
Prophetical subjects . . . . .	128	unpleasantness of . . . . .	241
Pronunciation, bad examples of . . . . .	242	Vinet, Professor, quoted 31, 126, 127, 327 . . . . .	361
Puritan sermons . . . . .	183	Volubility, Lord Brougham on . . . . .	361
<i>Quarterly Review</i> , referred to 58, 61, 314 . . . . .	314	Watson, Richard, referred to . . . . .	124
Rationalizing tendencies of the age . . . . .	41	Whately, Archbishop, referred to . . . . .	151, 152, 164
Reading, importance of, to a preacher . . . . .	49	Whitefield's devoutness in prepara- tion . . . . .	89
Reason, claims of, . . . . .	28	his manner in preaching . . . . .	70, 248
Rebukes, how to be administered . . . . .	77	his musical voice . . . . .	241
Reformation, preaching in the time of . . . . .	11	Wilkins, Bishop, quoted . . . . .	127
Richmond L. quoted . . . . .	217	Winchester, Bishop of, quoted . . . . .	337
Ridicule, use of, in preaching . . . . .	80	Wordsworth on the choice of words . . . . .	144
Rogers, Samuel, referred to . . . . .	172	Works, good, relation of faith to . . . . .	201
Sacraments and preaching . . . . .	9	Writing fine, dread of . . . . .	164
Saxon root, words of . . . . .	149	Written, sermon the, when intro- duced . . . . .	267
Science and the Gospel . . . . .	31	reasons for retaining . . . . .	270
South, Dr., on illiterate preachers . . . . .	52	Young Men's Societies . . . . .	39
account of a puritan sermon . . . . .	120		
Sermons, borrowing of . . . . .	58		



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